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DOGS LOUNGER

by FRANK FOWLER.



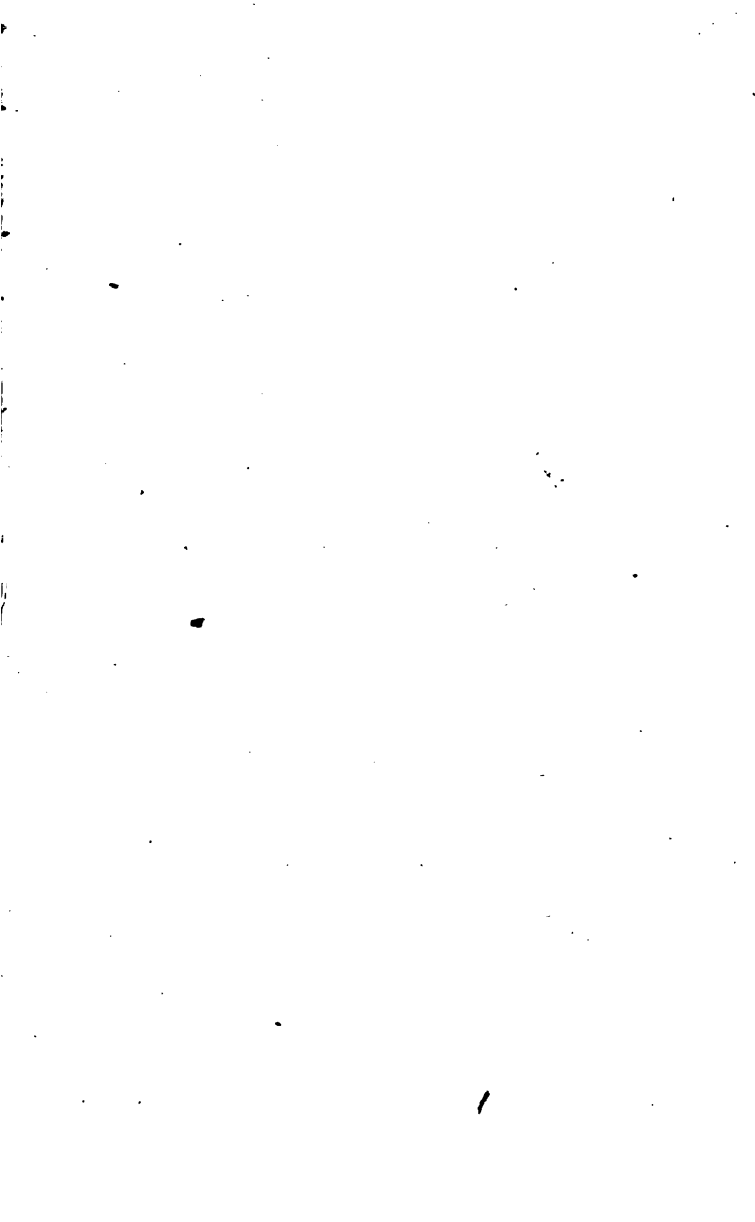
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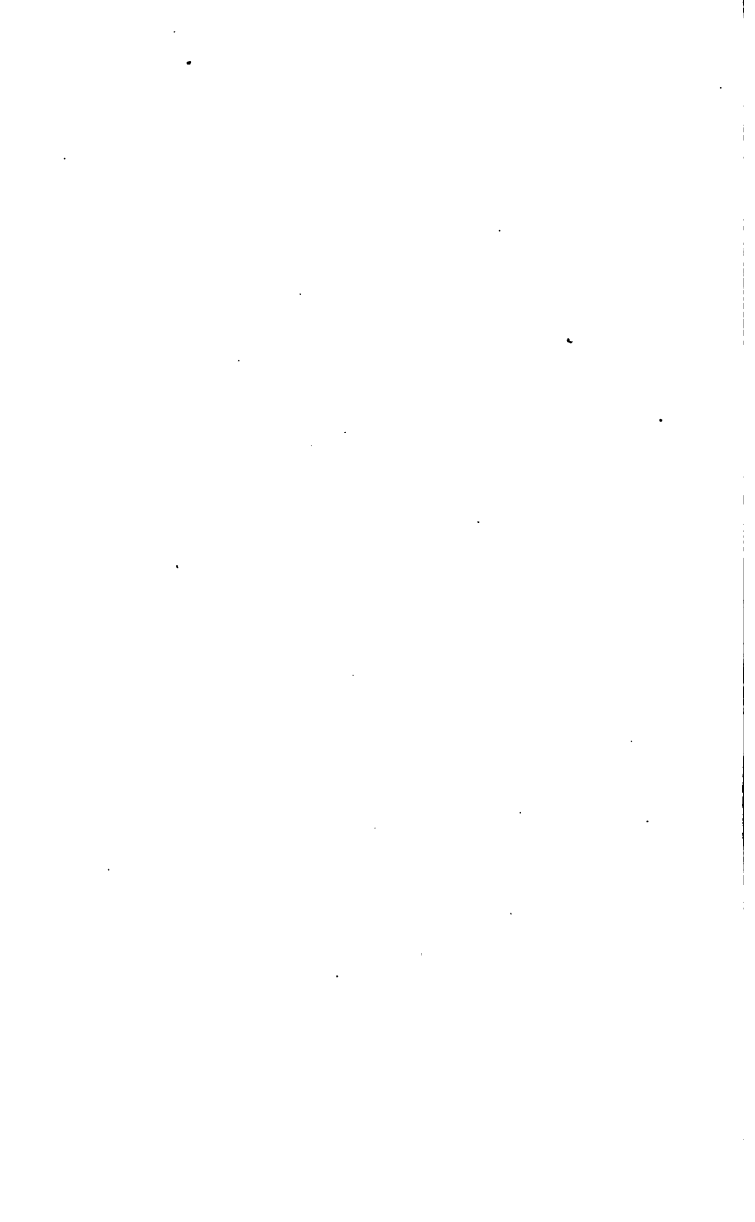
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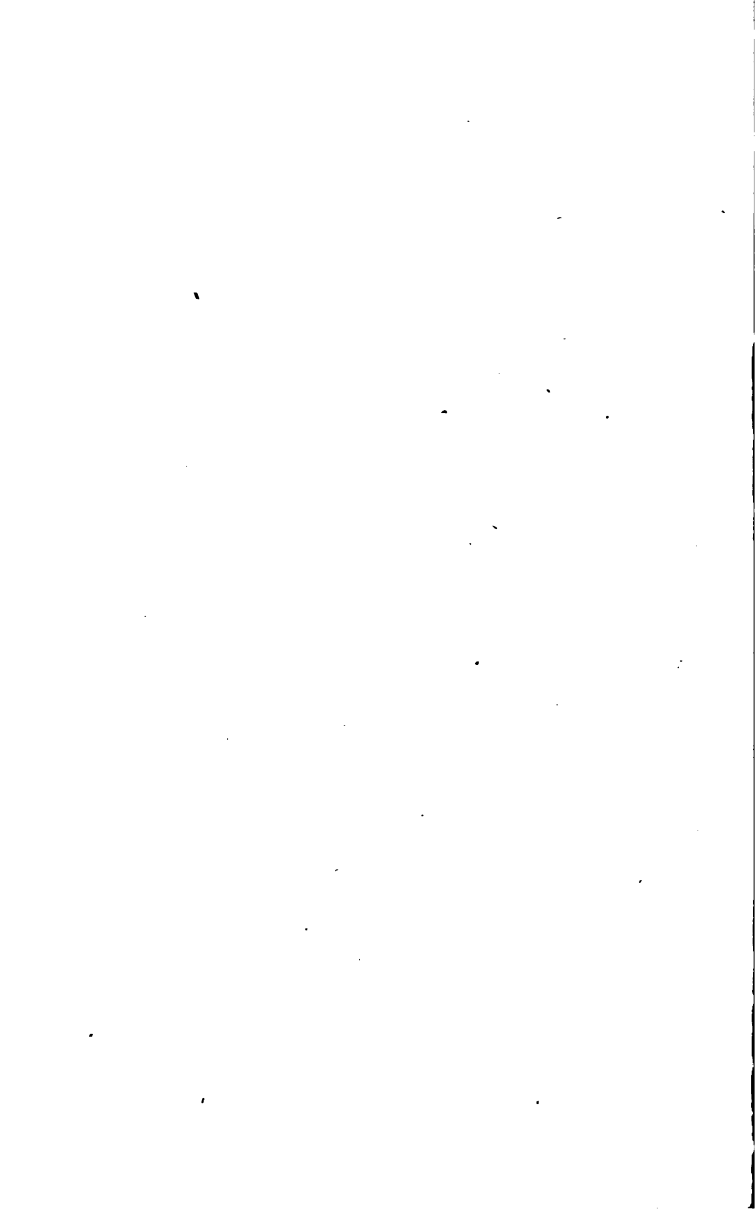


NOTE INTRODUCTORY.

Most of the papers forming this little book have appeared with my initial in the *Weekly Mail*, under the head of "Etchings by the Lounger in London." I mention the initial, because the earlier and more brilliant etchings published in the same journal were by the hand of a dear friend, whose *burin* I only resumed.

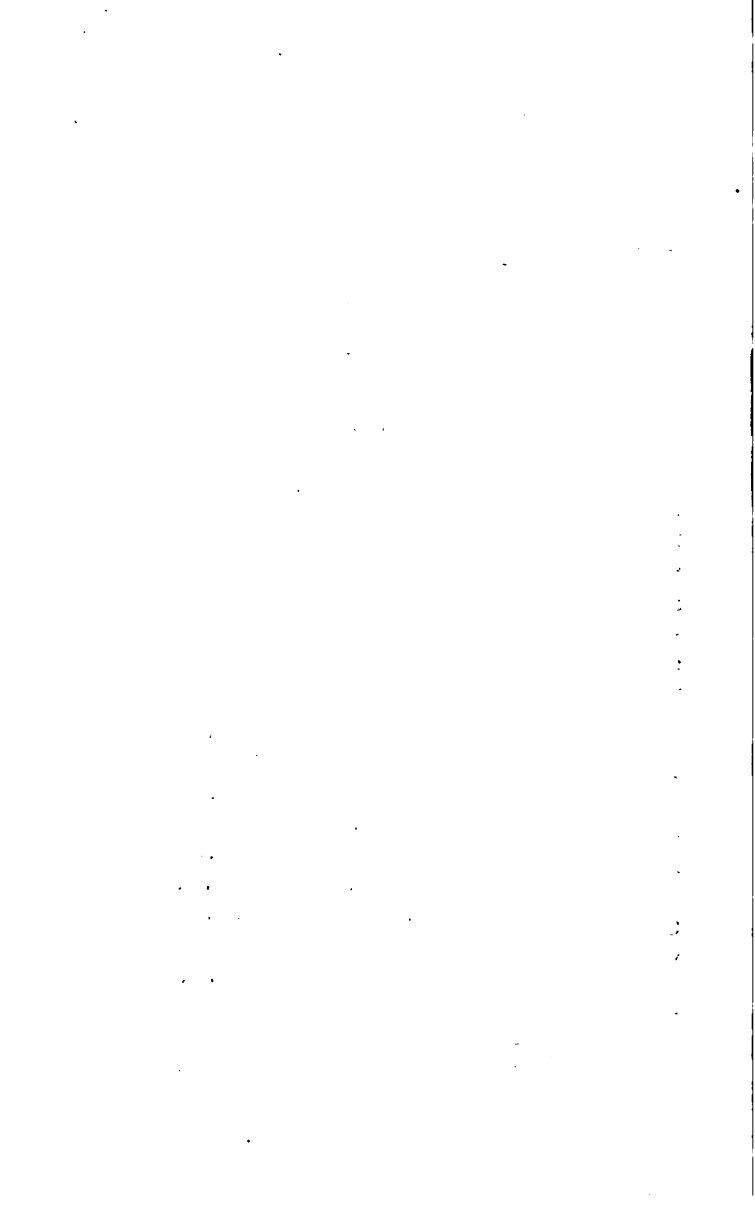
FRANK FOWLER.

LONDON, *July 21st.*



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DOTTINGS OF A LOUNGER.

I.

A PILGRIMAGE TO CANTERBURY.

IN his ripe old age, Sydney Smith is recorded to have said there was but one Illusion left him in the world, and that was, the Archbishop of Canterbury. He had himself become a canon—he had sat at table with bishops, and found them common mortals. Only the Primate-of-All-England-and-Metropolitan was left standing in the fields of Romance. “Is it a sign of shyness to crumble bread at dinner?” asked a young lady of the rollicking and reverend reviewer. “Oh! yes; I do it myself, with both hands, when I sit next to the Archbishop of Canterbury,” was the reply; clearly showing, you see, how awful was the influence this one “illusion” exercised upon a man who had even risen above pines at Christmas, and looked with complaisance on Dantzic-water.

I never could account for the solitary weakness of the prebendary until some thirty hours back, when, for the first time, I made pilgrimage to Canterbury, and put my knees upon the slab where the good a’Beckett fell. Having seen the See, I now under-

stand—and, I hope, appreciate—the Plymley peculiarity, and feel that a dignitary, whose crozier specially sways the Stour, is worthy of all the honour that simple, bread-devouring humanity can give him. (How those glorious edifices are *crumbling* away—so shy is Time in the presence of Religion!)

A big bit of Oxford, a bigger bit of Bruges, a forked river stretching its two beautiful arms round a cluster of churches, like the Greek Mother sheltering her offspring from the wrath of the son of Artemis,—a Cathedral defiant of description,—a ruined wall set up some eighteen centuries ago by Roman hands,—solitary limes standing, like monks, in old monastic piles, and chanting sadly in the sea-gulls crooning up of nights from Whitstable,—ancient British mounds, sturdy Danish donjons, quaint Saxon hostelries, proud Norman spires,—all these thrown together in a goodly valley hallowed by the footprints of England's earliest heroes—warriors, priests, and statesmen—make up that Canterbury seen by me for the first time on Wednesday last with a delight and reverence that it never entered into the hearts of Chaucer's pilgrims to conceive. Rare old city! History and Faith stand hand-in-hand within thy silent cloisters—the echoes of heroic voices peal through thy solemn aisles.

It was Coleridge who said an abbey always looked to him like a petrified religion. The force and fitness of the thought came home to me with fullest stress as I stood before the altar-screen of the Cathedral. A soft flush—gold and purple tints commingled—lay on the stones worn by the sandalled feet of early Christian saints, glanced on the

tombs where lie the kings and martyrs, fell in mysterious patches on the dark oaken choir, and glinted resplendent on the broken and blackened lines of fret-work crawling round the nave. But amid all the wondrous beauty of the place, a sense of desolateness reigned supreme. It grew upon the mind until the Spirit of the Past seemed to stand majestic amid the fossil forest of interlacing pillars: the aisles were peopled with abbots and friars; censers were swinging in the chancel; the early Saxon queens were on their knees before the altar; and all the while the measured throbbing of the bell came like the memory of some Gregorian chant anthemed beneath that roof a thousand years before. I saw Augustine in his scarlet robe, with Ethelbert, the Yellow-haired, beside him; I saw my lady Mildred hand-in-hand with old Canute; I saw the shaggy Dane stalling his steed against the marble columns; I saw Archbishop Alphage borne by the rough invader a prisoner from the place; I saw Lanfranc and Anselm with their clattering beads and ivory crucifixes; I saw the King-Confessor muttering orisons in the taper-lighted chapel of St. Bertha; I saw a'Beckett moving bare-footed through the glimmering cloister on his way to matins—I heard him chant, "We beseech thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thy anger and wrath be turned away from us and from our holy house, because we have sinned"—I saw the band of armed assassins deepening the shadow of a neighbouring tomb—I saw them rush upon the prelate—I heard a stifled groan, a choking "Christ have mercy!"—I saw the shaven temple strike the granite flag—I saw a splash or two of blood, a—

The white-robed choristers trooping down the aisle aroused me from my dream. I awoke as from a slumber—took a seat in front of the tomb of Archbishop Chychedy, and listened to the service. I don't know exactly when Chychedy flourished—the Gothic inscription round the mausoleum is so blurred and broken—but, judging from his effigy, he must have lived a long, long time ago, and have been in life a right jovial son of the Church. There he lies on the dark slab of granite, dressed in archiepiscopal robes, and with a sprinkle of the red powder which time has wafted from his vermilion cloak resting on the tip of his nose. What a fine jolly nose it is!—what a pair of aldermanic cheeks are those to which it serves as promontory! This was the man to see that the soup served out at the monastery wicket was thick and slab, and to take the lion's share of that hundred muids of wine which some early King of France bequeathed “for ever” to the monks of Canterbury. The archbishop evidently knew he was a well-favoured and portly hierarch, and, as a moral to all other men of similar presentable aspect, ordered his monument to be designed in set didactic manner. That is to say: On an upper flag of shining granite plentifully sown with armorial bearings we have him in his canonicals and crown. His head reposes on a purple cushion with golden tassels, and his fingers are set with many signets. That is the Archbishop as he appeared in the flesh—a sort of well-mannered, clerical Jack Falstaff. But under—there on that block of Purbeck—how different is the picture! A naked, shrivelled corpse—so thin, that the eyes are buried in their spheres, and every rib pricks through the skin—is the

Archbishop when Death has stript him of his gauds. You have seen, reader, those companion etchings by Mr. Thackeray—"Ludovicus Rex in his Purple" and "Ludovicus Rex in his Shirt?" For Ludovicus read Chyehely, and we have here the same bitter pasquinade in marble. Go, get thee to thy pastor and tell him, though he put on cambric bands, to this favour must he come at last!

The service is over, and the little old lady in black who holds the keys of the Cathedral volunteers to take me and some other visitors round the edifice. She begins with the tomb I have just quitted, points out, with an awful Pre-Raphaelite nicety, the twin angels with gamboge wings at the Archbishop's head, and the two little white chaps with big books in their hands at his toes. She shows us, too, just the fringe of hair round the scalp of that poor corpse beneath—points out the hollow in its cheek, and the arched natural form of the leg-bone, just covered with the puckered skin. I am about to become sadly contemplative, when a good-tempered old lady forming one of the party, and called by her friends Mrs. Fritz, casually remarks, "Ah! poor thing, he *was* uncommon thin out of his clothes!" and this *diverts* the current of my reflections.

Our conductor is an intelligent little body, with a sharp pair of bead-like eyes, that seem to peer through the thickest murks and glooms with a keenness almost feline. She carries a bunch of old bronze keys in her hand, and trips along the tombstones, with the clinging damp upon them, in the airiest manner. She speaks in a low monotone, as if afraid the owners of the graves would overhear

her statements concerning them, and correct her on the spot. Her imperturbability is great. She will describe nothing out of its turn, and receives the remarks of visitors with a set, sculptured sort of smile, which *must* have been copied from some of the more benignant of the statues. "That," she says, pointing to a coloured strip of stone-carving in the wall,—“that is the celebrated Canterbury diaper, of which you have heard so much.” “Dear me,” says Mrs. Fritz, looking everywhere, and failing to see anything which fell in with her notions of diaper, “I suppose them young singers have their overshirts made of it.” Our conductress smiles and moves on to a restored monument in dark granite, with a tattered jacket of uncurried leather, a pair of rough gauntlets, and a rusty helmet suspended above it. “This,” she says, “is the grave and these are some of the clothes of Edward the Black Prince.” I observe a sprinkling of dry dust upon the face of the full-length effigy lying on the tomb, and, on examining it, I see it has crumbled from the old leathern jacket above. I fall to musing again, when Mrs. Fritz once more ventures a remark. “I’ve heard o’ them black princes before,” she says; and then adds, after a slight pause, “I suppose this one was converted by the missionaries.” Another faint smile from our janitress, and we are led to new sarcophagi. I don’t care much for the resting-place of Henry IV. and his second queen, Joan of Navarre; but I find myself pausing before the plain, coffin-shaped, inscriptionless tomb of the grave Coligny, and the equally unostentatious cenotaph of the patriotic Langton.

I am not allowed to rest long. Our guide—

scenting her fee, perhaps, from afar—comes running after me,—as you may have seen a hen run after a little one who has suddenly darted from the brood, and takes me below—down in the “Transept of the Martyrdom,” where Thomas a’Beckett fell. She shows me the stone let in at the exact place where the head of the martyr struck the pavement, the original piece, clotted with gore and brains, having been borne as a precious relic to the Vatican. The tessellated fragment is the exact image of one of those queer little Seltzer-water bottles (neck and all), and immediately around it the flags are channelled by the knees of worshippers who, in different ages and from various climes, have put up their prayers and oblations from the spot. It is clear that Mrs. Fritz looks upon a’Beckett as a contemporary, for after listening—with sundry ejaculations of “the brutes,” “the villains,” and so on—to the story of his murder, she remarks interrogatively at the close, “I haven’t read anything about it; but, of course, they hung ’em for it, ma’am?”

I can stand Mrs. Fritz no longer, and, watching my opportunity, I step behind a pillar and subsequently escape the party. In making my way through the crypts I come upon the sepulchre of Dean Fotherby, ornamented on every side with human skulls and bones (the hollow ribs looking like a gridiron on which the rest are to be devilled) all so exquisitely cut in dull calcined-looking marble that it is impossible to touch them without fancying that a mortuary taint is left upon the hand.

Directly facing this monument is a portrait, vigorously painted upon copper, of a fine, dark-eyed, red-cheeked ecclesiastic, known in his day as Dean Bar-

grave. The picture is a sort of protest against the ghostly ornamentation on the opposite tomb, and the unctuous smile which plays around the "chiselled" lips dissipates the blue devils, generated by the chiselled bones, as if by magic. Having refreshed myself with a good look at the Dean, I go still lower beneath the Cathedral until I find myself in a dim under-croft, and here I stumble against a young lady—pale, pretty, and Puseyite of countenance—seated at the foot of a pillar, sketching the columned distances by the grey light that steals in through the splits and abrasures in the walls. Ah! many a glorious picture could I make, an' the power were in me, in those illimitable-looking crypts. The strange half-light—certes,

"The light that never was on land or sea"—

that streams with chaste and tender beauty through the vaults, touching the outlines of the arrow-headed arches, and sharpening the edges of the countless columns forming, from every side, long monumental alcoves—the old oaken doorways with fretwork of steel or bronze running over them, and fluted pillars wasting at the sides—the little oratories built within the walls and lighted by the small cruciform panes of stained glass, and what of colour Time has left in the bosses on the roofs—the broken tombstones robbed by Vandals of their brasses, but still showing the ruts in which they had lain—all these, with the strange religious atmosphere that rests upon and mellows all—that gives a sacredness to Ruin—should be the subjects, or *hints* of subjects to occupy pencil.

Before I leave the crypts one thing startles me. I find those blasphemers with the penknife, Smithers and Tomkins, have penetrated here, and carved their patronyms upon the pillars. Can you believe that any man with a heart in his bosom, and a feeling, however faint, of veneration in his heart, could stand within a shrine holding the earliest relics of our faith—whose every stone is consecrated with the blood of martyrs—and scrawl his wretched name upon the walls? Why, the utter insignificance of one's individuality in such a place—an acre of masonry reared by the holy hands of princes and prelates, and rich in the historic glories and historic griefs of near two thousand years—should make even a Montmorency forget the title of his house. But the Goths of Islington and Clapham are heartless, brainless, and unreverential. T. Buckrey, G. Mitton, G. Horsey, H. Thomas, S. T. Smith, — Taylor, and C. Payne, have left their marks near Langton's tomb. What a satire on that Magna Charta which Langton won, when barbarians like these possess the rights and liberties of freemen!

As soon as I can I make my way into the open air. After much wandering, I gain the cloisters, mouldering in dusky magnificence, and overgrown in parts with ivy, moss, and wall-flowers. From these I return into the body of the cathedral, and as I walk down the nave, see that the richly-stained windows throughout the edifice—even those in the Chapel of the Virgin—have been fronted with a screen-work of plain ground glass. And so, I muse, there are Vandals up-stairs, down-stairs, and in My Lady's chamber! This screening of the windows, though, supplies me with a metaphor. The plain

glass shutting out those dazzling tints of rare Venetian dye, is like that cool theology of the intellect which would shut out the warm religion of the heart.

I have left the Cathedral, passed under that ancient gateway where the statues have fallen from their bases, and the once-delicate tracery is all rubbed out, and am now making my way to the Dane-John. I reach the antique tumulus at last, and from its summit look out on the surrounding scene. I see the City lying, a huddle of red houses with the grey of spires intermixed, in a broad and pleasant valley, the Cathedral overlooking all, and the Stour winding along with the cool shadows of limes and elms upon its bosom. I *fancy* I see the little garden where old Dr. Strong—with his good young wife at his feet—busied himself with his dictionary, and the house where Uriah Heep and his charming mother “umbly” pursued their ways. Yes, that is it, with the slippery wall—slippery from Uriah’s touch as he shuffled everlastingly before the windows. Those two figures, both somewhat pale and sad, standing in the background and gazing with a reminiscent sorrow at the garden-pathways, are Copperfield and Agnes. . . . Oh! how beautiful is the country all around, and what a gleam is thrown across the landscape by that procession of tall chesnuts, bearing cierges of white light, near the Monastery of Augustine. Who would not have been a monk in Pre-Reformation times, reading the Fathers in these quiet valleys till the sun went down, and then adjourning to the refectory to drink the best of wine and chant the best of anthems? Oh! many have told of the monks of

old; but those who have not seen Canterbury have no idea of what a glorious race they were.

NOTE.—I have spoken of Vandalism at Canterbury. Since writing the above I have again visited the place, and am aghast at the barbarities which the Present has been committing upon the Past. From one fact may be gathered the full extent of the savage desecrations: the glorious old Castle has been turned into a Gas Factory, and the ends of rusty retorts are thrust, like cannon, through its loopholes. Indignation is dumb: but what a strange ironical light those gas works throw upon our civilization!

II.

A DEPUTATION TO DOWNING STREET.

I FORMED one of a deputation last week, and intend to let you, *lector benevole*, know all about it. The deputation itself was "numerous and respectable" (there were a score of M.P.'s amongst us), and its object—well, never mind its object. That would be telling you rather too much.

We met at Downing-street about two o'clock, in a shabbily-furnished apartment, with antique book-cases round the sides, and a very sinister-looking portrait of Sir Robert Walpole over the mantel. I went down in a Hansom cab to keep my boots clean: I had never been one of a deputation before, and, as I had formed a determination to take an active part in the proceedings, I wished to appear in tolerable trim. The members of the deputation increased every moment. They came flocking from Fendall's by the dozen, until the chamber was uncomfortably filled. Altogether, we formed a strange, and, I think, not uninteresting, group. Men from all parts of the country were present. There was Wassail, the great teetotaller, heavy and tall, and loosely hung, his pockets exuding with periodicals, and his large, dark forehead steaming with enthusiasm.

There was young Cæsar Augustus, the comic writer, too, who looked very much like a compound of Jack Sheppard and Boots at the Swan. Having heard of Augustus—having read Augustus with considerable delight—I could not refrain from taking especial notice of him. Augustus has a round, rubicund, rollicking face, purpled with good cheer, and shining out over his foamy tight-buttoned coat, like the illuminated top of a Pharos. Augustus, to keep up the sporting aspects of his appearance, had a bit of a plaid stock twisted about his neck, and centred with a shrewd, lively-looking stag. But what most struck me in the man was the sly twinkle in his eye, which, by the way, never twinkled twice alike. Now the brow dropped over it, and the eye, half hidden, shone out like a morsel of gold embedded in quartz. Now he glanced to the left, and winked and blinked like a magpie sidling on his perch. Now he looked straight forward, and the light in the eyes danced about with fitful flashes of mirth, like the shadow of the trembling lustres in the bubbling Moselle. And talking of Moselle brings me to another feature of C. Augustus. It is reddish-blue like “Comet-port,” curved like a punch ladle, and set with jewels—of better than the best *water*—like my Lord-Marquis’s snuff-box. It is essentially a good-humoured nose, like Bardolph’s, and a standing protest against the doctrines of Wassail and his friends.

Wassail, to say the best, is a grimish-looking man. He has a tremendous countenance, as if he laboured under water on the face. That face, when he speaks, flushes to all sorts of colours, like a dolphin approaching demise. He brings out his words with a gurgle, like water poured from a small-necked flask,

and moves his arms up and down during his discourse as if he were filling invisible buckets from an imperceptible pump. I see in Wassail, however, the makings of a good citizen. There is an amiable ferocity, as the Italian has it, about him—a sturdy self-reliance—which I have noticed, more or less developed, in the faces of Wassail's pushing, plucky, persevering order.

Wassail is the leading member of the deputation, and the First Lord* listens to him with great attention. First Lord himself meanwhile plays with his glasses, and brushes, with his finger-tip, flecks of dust from his velvet collar. He looks askance occasionally at Augustus, as if he had a notion that he was the editor of the *Morning Tankard*, or a licensed victualler who had mixed himself up with the wrong deputation. Ah, First Minister! you little know your guests. May you not entertain comic writers unawares? The genius of Augustus is taking your photograph as perfect as the sun, and, in less time than those slowly-travelling hands go twice round the clock, ticking with official deliberateness above your head, your lordship's portrait, to the minutest line, will be safely preserved in "Faust of Mentz's leaden types."

There are among the group about me several Members of Parliament.† I see a brilliant man, in well-cut clothes, flitting about like a moth. There is a tall, unwieldy-looking member, too, just behind, with a face rudely mapped out, and a head like a globe. Just at my elbow, stroking his ripe crop of

* The Earl of D——.

† It may be as well to mention that Messrs. D. Nicol, Wild, and Roupell were present.

beard, is a little, square-set, brown-coated man of about thirty summers. He is kicking my hat, which lies on the carpet at my feet, and wiping his shoes on my great-coat. I am about to call him to order, when a raffish sort of old man, from Wales, steps forward to read a memorial to the First Lord, and my honourable friend stops shuffling his shoes on my upper garment and quietly remarks, "Old Blazes looks as if he intended to make a long speech: pull his coat-tail if he tries it on!"

First Lord thinks the same, and while Old Blazes is hanging fire in the middle of his opening sentence, suggests that he should "compress" his remarks, as his lordship has another deputation (over the luncheon-table, perhaps), at half-past three.

Old B. complies, and contents himself with placing a heap of papers on his lordship's table. He then retires, after which Mr. Corridors comes in his stead. Corridors, too, is a little man, with a head powdered with snow and just the faintest hint of an iron-grey whisker. He addresses the grandee behind the table in a broad Scotch accent, reading those portions of his prepared speech which he has forgotten, and striking out boldly into "extempore" the moment his memory comes to his aid. He has a good deal to say—and he says it half confidentially, as if the Minister had chatted it over with him privately beforehand, and the pair had come to some amicable opinion on the matter—concerning the quantity and quality of Scotch water. I wonder as I listen to Corridors if it be really true that another deputation is awaiting the First Lord, and, if so, to what subject it will draw his lordship's attention. I wonder, too, if he thought at all about *our* deputation before we arrived, and, if

so, whether he knew the character of the men who would have to make the speeches, and the character of the speeches which would have to be made. I wonder further, did he mention it to her ladyship at breakfast; and if so, what the countess, as she handed him the toast, advised him to say.

As I have my oration nicely in my head, I fancy how astonished his lordship will be when, at the conclusion of the programme, he asks if any one has anything further to say, I step forward to the table, announce myself as the Lounger in London, and request to be heard upon the subject. I think what a relief it will be to the Minister to hear something new after the string of old and tiresome arguments which has been inflicted upon him. As I am thus pondering, a new voice, clear and chirrupy, breaks upon my ear. I look round, and behold the First Minister on his legs.

No, not on his legs—for his lordship keeps his seat, and only raises his glasses over his eyes. As he goes chirping along, telling the speakers bluntly that they have wearied him by talking so long and saying so little, I reproach myself with not having been on the alert when the other orators had concluded, and think what a loss his lordship and the deputation have sustained. What a speaker First Lord is! His words come trooping out with a blithe, brisk accent, remarkably refreshing after the hard, square tones of Corridors and the other previous speakers. He seems to whistle his words like a blackbird. By the way, how is it, as I watch him, I imagine he has the *look* of a bird? Is it that bit of shining plumage—that glossy streak of velvet—round the neck? Is it that slightly-hooked nose peculiar to the genus

falco? Or is it that eye which glitters so keenly, and seems—like a bird's—to have the microscopic and telescopic power of seeing distinctly both a-near and a-far off? His lordship's speech is, without doubt, the best of the day, although, in its purport, it is not at all calculated to raise the spirits of the deputation. At its conclusion the exalted glasses take their seat again upon the ministerial nose, and his lordship, brushing the heap of papers which have been presented him upon the sofa, hurriedly lifts the sash of the window—as nobles will, you know, after a deputation—and, like a bird again, flits rapidly from the chamber.

I am jostled down stairs with the crowd, and find my Hansom—which I had intended to dismiss, but forgot—patiently waiting. I give myself the airs of an M.P. at the end of journey, and cabby is content with only a shilling over his fare.

III.

NUISANCES.

BEYOND all computation—like flies hovering about a barrel of molasses—are the nuisances of this world. The little nuisances, like the little flies, plague one most, and it is on some of these that I am going to say a word or two. The larger nuisances I let pass. Their very proportions save them. We kill the fly, when, for the sake of our glove and the window-pane, we spare the blue-bottle.

Ah! my dear reader, how many nuisances are there like the blue-bottle—dashing across our path with a buzz, running their heads against the fine webs of wisdom and decency we have set up, and defiling the comely effigies of all our household deities? But it is not with nuisances like these I have to deal just now. I stick my pen through *them*, and keep them fixed upon my desk until a fitting opportunity arrives for their dissection.

The nuisances I am about to catalogue are, apparently, of an insignificant description. It is their very smallness, however, which makes them so annoying. The conferva splits the flint—the hair disarranges the chronometer—and it is the pettiness of my numerous list of grievances which pesters and plagues me most.

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Why should I, for instance, as I am walking quietly along the street be struck in the face, or—to put it under the mark—have my hat knocked into the mud, because it has become an institution with all the oilmen in the metropolis to have their bundles of wood thrown from hand to hand into their shops, rather than carried in by the basket-full?

We have been told, for I don't know how long, that one bad example is sure to beget others. Euripides and St. Paul have told us so in Greek—our writing-masters have told us so in small-hand. I know the truth of it. Why, because the oilman makes a fool of himself with his bundles of wood, should the greengrocer do it with his bunches of greens? Nay, more. Why should Mr. Patnas Rice, the tea-merchant, extend the nuisance to his loaves of sugar? and Mr. Concrete, the builder, to his cart-loads of bricks? These bricks are almost worthy to be classified as a nuisance by themselves. How the fellows catch them—for they invariably break in two, like over-baked Genoa cakes, as they alight one upon the other in their hands—I am at a loss to make out. I am sure that if a law were passed to compel the men to “unload” in this ridiculous manner, it would be considered as a greater hardship than that Egyptian legislation on the same subject which forbade the use of straw. So stands, then, the first of these established nuisances, and so it is likely to stand until some one has sufficient patriotism and pluck to pitch wood, greens, sugar-loaves, bricks, and the “skilled labourers” who throw them, into the gutter.

Not less irritating is my second nuisance. I and Mrs. L. are sitting quietly in our suburban

parlour at breakfast, when a violent rat-tat comes at the door. The domestic is up-stairs with Master L.—*etat*. two and a-half—and as Mrs. L. is pouring out the coffee I remove my feet from the fender where they are reposing, and go to receive the visitor. What is my disgust on opening the door to see either a man with clothes-props or a withered old woman in faded black with a basket-full of crochet-work? Now do these nuisances really think that it is necessary to prompt a man as to when he wants clothes-props or anti-macassars? Is not every one the best judge on such a subject for himself? My objection to the prop-man is very decided. In the first place, I have found out he is the Bogie with whose name the domestic frightens Master L. aforesaid; in the next, he is in the habit of resting his stock-in-trade against my railings while he is luxuriating in a neighbouring beer-house, so that it has more than once happened that friends calling upon me have gone away impressed with the notion that, to prop up a scanty living, I do a little in the clothes-line business; and, in the third place, I have a shrewd suspicion that he is the man to whom our last servant, after buying a couple of props, gave a sovereign to change at the public-house, and who never returned to claim the three dozen of clothes-pegs he had left in her hands as security.

In partnership, I suspect, with the clothes-props is Miriam with the port wine on her face, who is constantly coming to my house, and sounding the loud timbrel on a set of jugs of three different sizes—bass, tenor, and alto—which, she assures me, I shall have for a single old hat or a discarded pair of boots. Now, I know Miriam only wishes to beguile me with

such a promise, and that if I were to offer her my entire suit for those sonorous pieces of crockery, she would still want the old hat and superannuated Wellingtons into the bargain. By the way, how is it that our Hebrew sisters have such a love for the cheap china business? The pleasantest music in the world to them is the jingle of Staffordshire ware; and I sometimes think how strange it is that more than two thousand years after their deliverance from Babylonian captivity, their harp, as Polonius would say, should still be on the "willows."

But all my nuisances are not at-home. As I come, full-dressed out of my house, I stumble over a young urchin, who asks if I won't take nine pieces of hearth-stone for a penny, and who, when I refuse, persists in following me up the street as though he intended to stone me the moment I got at a convenient distance from my home. Then there is the watercress man, who seems to think cresses are worn in the button-hole like violets, for he will stop me even as I am going into church, and entreat me to purchase a bunch. These are only samples of a numerous class: the worst nuisances of all, however, are those I encounter after I have got fairly into town.

First of all comes the 'busman, who thinks I must always be going to Putney; for, standing at the corner of Fleet-street, with the door of his carriage wide open, he invariably seizes me by the arm, as I am passing, and, with well-affected haste—as if he had been waiting for me all the morning, and, now that I had arrived, was determined to make up for lost time—pushes me up the steps with a sort of familiar "All-right-sir—we're-just-off." I am not now overstating the case. Thrice within the month

has the cab had me up the steps, and on the last occasion was highly indignant with me, when I had hurried down again, for refusing to pay him his fare. "Jist be careful another time," was his parting advice, "and count your ha'pence *before* you get into a vehicle!" I often fancy if this man had been born in the same class of life as Mr. Hayter, how poor a whipper-in to the "House" the irresistible William Goodenough would have seemed in comparison.

But there is another nuisance, belonging to the same class of life, even worse than the 'busman. Wherever I may be, if I call a cab, a man starts up, like a gourd from the ground, to fling open the doors and tell the jarvy where I wish to be driven. This nuisance is always alike—ragged, owlsh-looking, and unkempt. I never hailed a cab in my life that he did not appear, and, before Jehu could bring his horse to a stand, fling open the flaps and asks my destination. He is a kind of "Poor-Jack,-Your-Honour," upon land, attached to some particular cab round which he hovers, to partake of its prey, as the Nile-bird about the shark.

By dropping into a coffee-house, however, I escape from this and other nuisances—high amongst whom is the woman at the corner of Wellington-street, who seems to think that every man who is out after six o'clock in the evening must be going to Drury-lane Theatre, and requires a bill of the play. At the coffee-house, however, another nuisance meets me.

There is an old man sitting in the same box, and to him, just as I enter, the waiter gives the evening paper. To this—as if he divined that I had come for the sole purpose of seeing it—the old fellow devotes himself. I await patiently for some time, but

at length venture to say that I should feel obliged if he would give me the paper as soon as he has done with it. What respondeth he—and he is a standing nuisance at every coffee-house in the metropolis—upon hearing my request? Why, he respondeth nothing, but reads every line in the sheet from heading to imprint. I see his lips moving as he spells through the words, and my fingers tingle to tear the paper from his hands. What may be his precise notion of an evening journal I cannot pretend to say; but it is evident he thinks yesterday's debate, as given on the back page, is its principal and most interesting feature. This he reads carefully through, while all the time I am working myself into a fever. I see, by the movement of his lips, he is not even skipping the "hear-hears" or "cheers," and, in thorough despair of ever getting the paper at all, I call for the *Saturnine Review*. This composes me, like opium, and in about an hour afterwards, as I awake from my doze, I see my venerable friend quietly returning the paper to the waiter.

If, after leaving the coffee-house, I *do* look in at half-price to Drury-lane, I am again annoyed. Seated on my right is a moustachioed gentleman, who hums all the tunes after the orchestra; on my left is an old lady who persists in eating sandwiches, moistened with oranges, between each of the acts; and behind is a young dandy, who seems to think it the finest thing in the world to turn all the more serious parts of the play into ridicule. This last is the greatest of all established nuisances, and, to keep myself from kicking him, I suddenly leave the house.

IV.

MY NEIGHBOURHOOD.

My Neighbourhood is notable for three things—photographic artists, barrel-organs, and a canal. A friend of mine wishes to add a fourth in the shape of comely damsels ; but as for my own part I never saw any, and as my friend himself once pronounced “the Viardot,” as he calls her, to be handsome, and waited two hours after midnight outside the stage-door of Covent Garden just to see Madame Garcia step into her brougham, I don’t think it necessary to extend the number of local specialities with which I have started. And supposing—for I don’t intend to leave myself open to attack under this head—supposing, I say, there *were* comely lasses in my neighbourhood. What of that? Are there not Houris in every parish? If there be pretty girls in My Neighbourhood (I certainly know one, but then she has weak eyelashes, wears tremendous pearls in her hair, and lives on a block in a barber’s window), there are pretty girls everywhere, so that is not at all necessary I should make a point of it.

But the organs, the photographic artists, and the canal are local features, and with these I have a right to deal. Of course, I know that the remark I just

made about the damsels will apply to the daguerreo-typists, and, in fact, to the barrel-organs. There are barrel-organs and portrait-takers everywhere, says the reader. Alas! I know it. I have had my portrait taken on the side of the Grand Pyramid, and I once met a man grinding a barrel-organ to a band of Aborigines in the interior of Australia. But never and nowhere did I meet artists and organs like those that patronize My Neighbourhood. Neither is there a canal like mine in any other part of the world. Why, the number of dogs which bathe in that canal on Sunday mornings between the hours of ten and two, is incalculable. I saw four-and-twenty (including a large Newfoundland, that alone ought to reckon as three and a pup) take their baths last Sabbath morning. The yelping which one brute, not so thoroughly hydropathic as the rest—he is a Scotch terrier, with long yellow hair, which must take an uncomfortably long time to dry—is in the habit of making, is a terrible annoyance to Boanerges, who presides in the immediately adjacent church; and oftentimes the beadle has to sally forth and charge the whole canine mob, to the intense amusement of their sacrilegious proprietors.

Apart from the dogs, the canal—which I intend to describe now that I have launched myself upon it—is in many respects remarkable. Since I first came to the locality, I have never seen but three barges upon its waters. One is a substantial-looking craft, with coloured canvas and yellow bows, albeit the very antipodes of that yacht, whose “sails were of purple, and its prow of beaten gold.” And this allusion reminds me of another peculiarity connected with the canal. It is Nilitic in its source,

not even the oldest inhabitant being able to tell you whence it takes its rise. I once met with a man who said he "knew it" somewhere in Somersetshire, where (says he) it bubbles down the hills and through the valleys as pure as crystal, and talking to itself all the time as it goes purling over the stones like an old man who is taking a journey to a far country. My informant, however, was known in the neighbourhood as a "yokel," and, as such, I was not inclined to attach much importance to his testimony. He lives at present on the edge of the canal, keeps ducks, and sells new-laid eggs. He never talks about the canal now, though. He is become a silent and sorrowful man. When he came from the country he had a little girl with him, and this child used to play on the banks of the water with uproarious delight. One day the little thing was missing. Since then the father has looked older, and never cared to talk with me about the source of the canal.

But I was talking of the barges. The painted barge is always loaded with hay, and a shaggy white dog is ever asleep upon the top of it. There is a bit of a galley on deck, and I have seldom seen the barge without also seeing a slovenly-looking woman, with a pilot coat on, looking to some saucepan steaming away upon the top of the fire. I think this woman is the commander of the ship—at all events, I have observed her at the windlass assisting in hauling up the sails, and have heard her leading the chorus of "Cheerily-O!" on more than one occasion. It is a pretty sight to see this ship, she's called the *Betsy-Jane* (after her commander, perhaps), coming down our canal on a moonlight night, her grimy

sails becoming actually white, and her pitchy masts throwing a pleasant shadow on the water. At such times, and on peaceful evenings, too, when the sun is just setting and turning even the canal water into wine, I wish I was a bargeman and could go far away into the quiet regions of the country, where the calm is only broken by the measured tread of the old horse jolting along the banks, or the dreamy tinkle of the sheep-bells on the distant hills.

The two other barges are of a different order. I think they are a joint-stock concern, for one deals in coals and coke, the other in wood and potatoes. If this surmise be correct, they are a lazy firm, and must ultimately come to grief. They are always in one part of the canal, the skipper of the coal craft amusing himself all day with blasphemy and beer; the captain of the wood and potatoes in fishing patiently for dace. The two barges must arrive together, for as long as I have lived in My Neighbourhood I have never seen them apart, or in any different spot to the one they are now occupying just under my bedroom window. Who burns the coke and who eats the potatoes I am at a loss to understand. There is no shop or warehouse near except a whitening warehouse, and I am quite sure whitening isn't made from coal, and that the men at the works don't live entirely on potatoes.

About five hundred yards from the little bridge that runs across the canal we come upon the high-street of My Neighbourhood and the photographers. There are forty-three of these professional gentlemen in our district. They are all alike—young, moustachioed, and down-at-heel. A glass-case on each door-post contains the portraits of the public men

of the locality—young Wobbel, who takes the chair at the "Lively Glow-worms" figuring conspicuously in all of them. Wobbel has been "taken" in all manner of styles and attitudes, from sixpence plain to one-and-ninepence coloured and mounted. At the leading establishment, they have him in a turned-down collar and Hessians, in which dress Wobbel does a comic rendering of the "Maid of Athens" once a week at the Lively G.'s aforesaid. There is one artist, by the way, who hasn't got Wobbel. His establishment is not far from the parish church, and is set off with a picture of the clergyman, for which the reverend gentleman consented to sit on the double condition of receiving a duplicate copy for himself, and that Wobbel—Wobbel, the profane—should not be admitted into the same glass-case. This is the only establishment in the neighbourhood, too, which is not open on Sundays. The proprietor, you see, rings the bells at the church, and finds that far more remunerative than the taking of collodions. On Sunday the other shops are a pest. As you walk along, the portrait of some villanous-looking fellow is thrust into your face, at every half-dozen yards, with "Taken in this style, only sixpence, sir." A refusal, with the run of them, amounts to nothing—in fact, the majority of photographers don't believe in *negatives*. I am not a particularly vain man, and have but a small opinion of my personal appearance. Yet, I believe, at this moment, there are at least a score of Loungers in the various galleries of My Neighbourhood. There is one amenity, however, lurking under the fact. As I have never considered it necessary to give the various gentlemen who have dragged me into their studios my real name, but have

preferred to cut a joke at their expense, I find I am exhibited at one establishment as N. T. Hicks, at another as Dr. Cumming, at a third as Mr. Rarey, and at a fourth as the Rev. Mr. Spurgeon. This is equal to a new pleasure, and I intend to continue the trick until I have appeared as every notability in the Directory. Who knows but that by these means I may ultimately get into an illustrated paper?

The barrel-organs which infest My Neighbourhood are as remarkable as the photographers. They are one and all instruments which have used themselves up in town and taken to the suburbs, like broken-down swells who have passed through the Court. Altogether there are six organs in chief—one, in fact, for every day in the week—attached specially to the district, besides a goodly sprinkling of casuals. The instrument of Monday I call "My Poor Mary Ann," partly because its barrel chiefly subsists on that doleful tune, and partly because it is carried by a woman. It comes late in the evening, and is a very tall organ, with a wheeze in its throat, as if, from being out so much in the night-air, it had caught a permanent cold on the chest. As I said before, it confines itself to a single tune. I recollect on one occasion the proprietress made some mistake in fixing the stops, and it set off with the Old Hundredth. Bravely enough the chant was given for about half-a-dozen bars, but suddenly the barrel seemed to recollect itself, and refused to utter another sacred note. It was only at this point that its owner discovered the mistake she had made in the stops; the punctuation was rectified; and "Poor Mary Ann" resumed her dreary sway.

The organ that comes on Tuesday is not particularly remarkable, except that it affects foreign airs and makes a great point of *Deh con te* in the time of a waltz. Neither does Wednesday's instrument claim any special notice. It does its work as well as any organ which has been upon the streets at least a dozen years—and was stumpily built at first, fat and short-winded, as it were—can in fairness be expected to do it. It breaks down now and then, and has to "try back;" but, on the whole, as I say, it works decently for its age. Its latest tune is the "Battle of Prague," which it gives with a reduced report of artillery and an increased amount of dying groans. On Thursday we have another tall organ which invariably displays revolutionary tendencies in its airs. On Friday an idiot turns up with an instrument entirely destitute of works, and upon this the fellow will grind by the hour, apparently without being conscious that he is not eliciting the ghost of a note. Now and then, however, the thought seems to cross him that all is not right with the machine, for, taking it bodily in his arms, as you would a fractious child, he shakes it in front of him until the handle twirls round and round with his violence. On these occasions a little scotch of sound may be heard—fainter than the melody which lives in the wheel of a child's cart—but the thing very quickly relapses into silence. Some say that this itinerant is not an idiot at all, but a philanthropist, resolved, by means of his mute organ, to give us at least one day's rest in the week.

Saturday's organ is the favourite of My Neighbourhood. It has a troop of marionettes in front, and a live monkey on the top. This monkey is

dressed in uniform as a military officer, and, of late, has put on a baker's ticket as a badge. Hour after hour does the Italian grind away at the instrument, and, as the measured cadences of "Luther's Hymn" are rolled out, the little baboon bows and prostrates himself like a Fakir, to the delight of a crowd of urchins who are always gathered about him. Fine study for My Neighbourhood and the Friends of Italy: Signor Mulo filling his pouch on Luther's Hymn with the *recitativo* accompaniment of a chattering Jacko!

V.

A MAY MEETING.

I HAD been to see the Talking Fish—which cries “Mamma!” like a Christian—and was passing Grange’s—where, says Byron, he got an early copy of Southey’s “Vision” round a tart—which of course he didn’t—and was looking in the window of the immortalized pastrycook, when my eye fell upon a bill announcing, on the same day and at that very hour, a meeting of the Converted-Mussulman-Missionary-Aid-Society. Now, I had often heard of a May Meeting, and between ourselves, reader, had formed no very exalted notions concerning it. Standing there, however, gazing in at Grange’s, and thinking how much cherry brandy that bearded Mandarin next door, named Smith, diurnally consumed between his various courses of China—a pang of conscience twitched my lips (I saw the reflection of my face in a jar of golden apricots), and I thought—may not these fellows, like that Smith now, have misrepresented the spring gatherings, and may I not, in consequence, have formed a false impression concerning them? “The Converted-Mussulman-Missionary-Aid-Society. Meeting at Swillis’s Rooms at one. Chair to be taken by Lord Farren Wyde.” I re-read the bill, went into Grange’s (kicking aside

a little starveling native, who was sitting on the door-step with his eye resting hungrily on Smith's willow-pattern plates at the entrance of the Egyptian Hall), had some fruit, as the day was warm; came out refreshed, and at once turned my head for Swillis's Rooms and the Converted Mussulmen afore-said.

Who doesn't know Swillis's Rooms? A long, dungeon-looking row of windows, draped with curtains sallow as the skin of my Lady Tabitha Voucher, and mounted with dull cerulean hangings that always look as if they had just come home, unmangled, from the wash; wrinkled cornices picked out with crimson, like my Lady V.'s cheeks; centre chandelier re-furbished, like an antique swell, but perceptibly shaky about the joints—lustres winking obliquely at one another through the dust, as if they knew a thing or two that now and then took place beneath them, but had no intention of making a revelation; a little orchestra projecting, like an overhanging eyebrow, above a gloomy, blinking doorway, reaching nowhither; old mirrors with golden fret-work crawling over them, like glittering asps waiting for any Cleopatra who has yielded to the Temptations of an Antony, and then lost him after all; rows of venerable damask couches and half-dilapidated rout-seats; an all but palpable smell of stable coming up the broad stone staircase, and floating, touched in its progress with a dash of Frangipanni, through the chamber; groups of sallow dancing girls, in lozenges of pink, over the platform at the end; medallion of old man with slanting forehead (Heaven forgive me! he was a King, and Southey wrote that "Vision" concerning him) centring the dancers; unctuous patches

upon the walls where the little heads "running over with curls," and full of the sweetest of love-whisperings, have rested after the whirl and tumult of the waltz;—yes, these are Swillis's Rooms—this is the Eden into which no common Eve can gain admittance without the ivory counter of a coronetted sister.

In this room, as I entered, Lord Farren Wyde sat supreme. I knew him at once (they gave his picture away some years ago with an evangelical magazine) from the end of the chamber. There he was under that heavy-headed Georgian medallion and those light-footed Ionian maidens, as grim as a fanatical Thug who hasn't had a job for a week, and surrounded by a host of gentlemen in white neck-cloths, prim whiskers, and black tunics of attenuated cut. As I walked up the room to be as near the platform as possible, I took a note of the goodly company. Alas! the tribe of funny men had not gone beyond the truth. Such a collection of angular, tight-mouthed people I had never encountered before, and I trust I shall never encounter again. I remembered the pictures of the various races of men given in the geography books, and wondered why the New Jerusalem type had been consistently omitted. As I glanced around the room, this chilling thought passed, like a puff of east wind, through my mind: if I were a beggar dying on the stony road for want of a crust, I don't think there is a single soul in this place I should cry to for succour. O! those crabbed and sour-faced old dowagers! O! those costly Cashmere shawls strained like cerements about their square-set shoulders! O! those terrible poke bonnets with the proud little bows which ape humility set

up, like Grecian crosses, at the back! What a perfect Arabia Petrea of countenance is here! Every face looks congealed—every eye is cold and unsympathetic as that of the Talking Fish round the corner. Not one bit of warm-blooded humanity meets the gaze—from that velveted old lady there with Jeames standing vacantly behind her, to the young creature here on my right with the pale green spectacles and comprehensive reticule stuffed with tracts. If Religion were a Medusa, these, its professors, could not appear more lithic.

His lordship, in his acrid and repellent aspect, excels his flock. Look at him, my dear reader, and tell me if to be of the Faithful begets a face like that, there is not a good deal to be said on behalf of the Benighted. Over the nose of his lordship is a sullen triangle of wrinkles, so that his brow looks rugose as a primrose-leaf, or—a correcter figure, perhaps—frost-bitten as a savoy. Just now, you see, his lordship's nose is resting on the cold white palm held across his mouth, its thin peaked tip reposing superciliously on that admonitory fore-finger which is supposed to strike such terror into the softened hearts of shoe-blacks. A pair of small, dark eyes, like a steeple daw's, gleam somewhat languidly from beneath a pair of weak, ill-defined eyebrows. A flow of dusky hair falls from the sides of the somewhat narrow forehead behind his ears, where it crimps up rebelliously, and tries to effect, from behind, a coalition with his whiskers! Ah! those whiskers! Shall I make known their secret, or call to-morrow in Exeter-square, and, on the strength of having held my peace, ask his lordship to introduce me to

his bankers? Let us be honest. There is—as Faren Wyde is ever telling us with such pious gusto—corruption enough in this sinful world of ours already, and (D. V.) *I* will not be a party to increase it. Those whiskers, then, straight and sullen, and sharp as *chevaux-de-frise* of black pins stuck in either cheek, are——No, as I am a sinner, I can't. My pen sticks its nibs into the paper as an obstinate colt thrusts its pasterns into a rut, and refuses to carry me further. My pen is great and good. What need is there, because, by the single ray of sunshine which fell upon the platform, I saw the sanguine roots of his lordship's whiskers, to tell the world that they are *dyed*? Does not much of his lordship's fame hang upon that ebon frame in which his gloomy, Rembrandt-looking face is set; and why should I, at this period of his career, endeavour to undermine his reputation? Shall I trace his philanthropy in the cause of blacking to an interested motive, and write him down as a mere Tittlebat Titmouse of Ten Thousand a-year? Never. Let his whiskers pass; and let the uncharitable—of whom I am not—publish to the world that at one time they were the “rubric lines” of what is now a very evangelical-looking tablet.

His lordship's mouth is a far more interesting study to me. It is a splendid mouth for playing the cornet-à-piston, I should think. The lips are thin,—the upper one slightly pursed,—and turned in, as it were, upon the teeth. The triangle over the nose is repeated beneath it, so that a deep deltoid channel runs down by the corners of the mouth, and is lost under the chin. I see no geniality in that mouth. The old saints of Van Eyck have such mouths—not

the tender angels of Raphael. In fact, whenever I meet a man with a nose drawn up and a mouth drawn down—a combination, as it seems, of the proud Levite and the miserable sinner—I at once conclude that, however many shirt-collars with the catechism upon them he may send to the Copper-coloured Indians; however many soup-tickets he may carry about in his card-case; however many beautiful tracts he may have with which (after the tickets have run out) to comfort those who are a-hungred and a-thirst; however many desires he may express to Christianize Mumbo-Jumbo; however many solemn orations to this end he may deliver in the merry month of May,—he is yet lacking in the more genial attributes of humanity and religion. Your truly pious soul doesn't go through the world with a perpetual scowl or sneer upon the face—the real fruit and foliage of Christianity are not BIBLIOLITES!

Farren Wyde is well made up. He has a dull black dress coat with buttons slightly worn; a dark vest nearly fastened to the chin, and with a few luminous links of gold chain stretching across it; a black, primly-tied silk neckerchief; and hands as white as those Eastern sepulchres of which we have somewhere read.

While I have been taking note of all this, the Secretary of the Converted M.-M.-Aid-Society has read the yearly report. Secretary is a cheap edition of Farren Wyde. He dresses like him, talks like him, and scowls like him. The report is not without interest, and tells me much of which I was previously in ignorance. It sets forth that Mahommedanism cannot, by any possibility, survive another year; it abuses the Romish Church for employing "carnal weapons, such

as pictures and images," in the conversion of the Turk; and winds up by asking for more funds. The announcement that Mahomet will be nowhere in a twelvemonth is received with tremendous enthusiasm by the meeting, and the intimation that the Church of Rome has been making an idol business of its Mussulman mission, with a few faint groans. One ancient female on a front seat, doing a Tree-of-Life, well-appld, in crochet-work to while away the time, is very wroth about this last horror, and I hear her whisper to her next neighbour—our young friend with the green glasses—"Really it is high time these abominable Papists were put down!" I have just called to mind Shylock's bitter line about these Christians loving one another, when Farren Wyde takes possession of the meeting. There are one or two peculiarities in his style of address. He holds his thumb and forefinger together all the time he is talking, as if he had a pinch of snuff and didn't like to take it; he begins every sentence with big capitals, and the very emphatic words: "Now, depend upon it;" he lisps a little, and is occasionally undecided between his r's and his w's; he thrusts his chin forward repellently at the end of his paragraphs, and gives a curt snort at the conclusion of his address, like a church organ brought suddenly to a stop through the desertion of the bellows-blower. The women, however, hang enchanted on his words. He is, in their eyes, a combination of Oratory and Religion—Demosthenes with the pebbles of David in his mouth. The large amount of white of eye his lordship causes to be exhibited when he describes the forlorn condition of the Turk with his three wives and one prophet, is something awful to behold;

I never saw anything like it since the time I used to manipulate with the wire optic-nerve at the back of my sister's doll. "Only think," says his lordship, taking advantage of the impression he has made, "only think of a people that supplies us with all our ginger, carpets, sponges, and rhubarb being left in this dreadful state of heathenism!" "Poor dears!" says the old lady who was so hard upon the Catholics; and then, as if not quite certain she has taken the right tone, adds in the same breath, "The disgusting brutes, I'd let 'em have three wives!"

After his lordship has finished, another noble—the Earl of Caravan—throws himself upon the audience. He is a fair, effeminate young man, with orange locks, red whiskers, and very summery clothes. He has a light striped kerchief, light striped vest, light striped trousers, and light striped shirt, with light sapphire studs. He stands with his legs wide apart while he speaks—looking pyramidal as a church spire—and pronounces all the ed's at the ends of his verbs in true pastoral style. He is evidently a favourite with the ladies, especially with our young damsel of the coloured barnacles. She weeps copiously during his recital of Eastern barbarisms, and has to polish her glasses with her white whisk of cambric kerchief (stippled "Leah" in *orange hair*) at the conclusion of his address.

As I am told there is no one else of importance to speak after Caravan has halted, I make my way, at the close of his harangue, to the door. I find as I pass along that, with the exception of a full table of reporters—whom I commiserate from the bottom of my soul, and should like to ask out to take some toddy—there is scarcely a male to be seen in the

body of the meeting. They are all beloved sisters—all like Mrs. Weller, warm in the cause of “Flannel Veskets.” Well, the *Recoil* may ask—and there is no doubt much pregnancy in the question—if there were no such flocks of women, what would become of the “shepherds?”

VI.

DOWN THE SOUTH-EASTERN.

Even the Lounger gets a sight of the gorse and a blow off the hills now and again. One grows sadly dusty in body and spirit wandering over these London stones from moon till moon, seeing *her* only through the chimney-pots, or quivering cold and wan in the black, bleared mirror of the River. I have always thought London in spring-time less respectable than at any other time. When the white sunshine lies scorching on the stones, and the lean dogs loll their reeking tongues; when the tarnished rood upon the summit of St. Paul's glows out against the greenish sky—greenish through our yellow smoke—like the holy cross upon the banner of the Hermit; when horses champing at Parliament-door cast the foam angrily from their steaming mouths and toss their heads impatiently till their silver trappings rattle (well-bred animals within, especially Arabian of the flowing mane, foaming angrily, and champing impatiently, too); when the sun sets wrathfully, and tinges the backs of youthful bathers along the shingled strand of the Serpentine, until they look like figures in a landscape by Poelemburg—when its last rays throw a halo around the heads of the old chestnuts in the groves at Kensington; in fact, when summer has reached its height, and Swan and Edgar are

doing their heaviest stress of business—then I admit the Metropolis looks regally magnificent—swarthy, but splendid as an Ethiop queen. In the early months, however, when peas are first shown in Covent Garden, and asparagus is scarcely easy at five-and-sixpence a bundle—this London of ours is sternly uninviting. Asparagus and peas will do much, I admit, to make any city bearable; but they are not (even when supplemented with two opera houses) all the soul desires. The climatic peculiarities of May, in town, are not cheerful. Rather otherwise than cheerful, I should say. There is just enough sun to turn out all the grimy corners of the city full before our eyes—not enough to alchemize the dirt and hide the swallows' nests in golden films. I admit the sun tries to do as much with our straight stuccoed streets and our crooked blind alleys as he can; but nothing less than the potent radiance of July can make them tolerable. A great city, like a splendid woman, must be "made up." See my Lady Voucher, destitute of rouge and Frangipanni, and what is she? See London when the sun doesn't gild the coal-barges and the Thames isn't highly perfumed, and London looks poor and mean and miserable enough. Therefore, in May, I generally manage to run into the country: when the Thames begins to reek, as a good and loyal subject attached to British "institutions," I return to town.

I am just now sojourning at Reigate—queer little place, red in the face and staggering in gait as a late rejected candidate for its representation. But I am not going to describe the town at this moment. The run down (I went as far as Guildford, and have put up here on my way back) is the subject of the

present sketch, and I beg the reader to accompany me, keeping his eyes open on the journey.

After we get to Sydenham there isn't a dull mile on the road. Some of the fairest spots in Christendom are to be seen on this South-Eastern line. There are so many old castles on the hills; so many strange dialects—short as is the distance—breaking on your ear over the hedges; so many ruined mills lifting up their arms above the trees; so many children gathering rushes, stripping off their green barks, and piling the white wands in sheaves beside the brooks; so many old oaks protesting in gnarled force against the pretentious competition of neighbouring elms; so many streams overgrown with grass in such curt, yet affluent, umbrage that the sun's rays can only make them look still cooler to the eye; so many fields favoured to that extent with buttercups and daisies that it were easy to play Tom Tiddler at any point, and gather gold and silver by the lapful; so many white clefts in the hills through which the ghostly shadows stalk majestic; so many mysterious lights falling through the trunks of the slightly separated saplings on the uplands; so many runlets of white strawberry-blossom flowing about the little Canaans of gardens on the road-sides; so many sheep companioned beneath the shadiest trees, or munching with leisurely gusto the soft, succulent tops of the wild-cabbage growing on the edge of cuttings; so many fields where the corn is just high enough to *show* us, by its gentle waving, the wind too light to feel; so many red May-trees overhanging lucid pools and raining their fragrant blossoms on the heads of plovers cooling their feet beneath the water;—in fact, so many

and such varied beauties, that I blame my star I was not born a clown to live among them all my days, and have "the blood of the clover," as Mr. Emerson so fancifully puts it, beating in my veins.

The specialties of our journey are even fuller of loveliness than anything in this outline of generalities. There is a great hill near Reigate, the brow blasted as by fire, and with a number of blackened bushes rushing, like evil spirits, down the side. A dull, dark pool lies at the bottom; and the whole scene looks like a corporate commentary on the Scripture story of the evilly-possessed swine. Further on, near Dorking, there is a series of wooded circles on a long range of bluff hills, all so round and evenly planted, yet apparently at such an inaccessible elevation, that the mind wonders by whom—except the fairies—they could have been originally set up there; for whom—except the fairies—they stand there now. I should like to be up in one of those haunted circles some moonlight night, looking down on the silvered gables of the quaint old houses outlying Dorking; seeing the broken line of Roman ruin winding through the neighbouring cemetery, and gleaming, in the shimmer, white as marble; noting that mausoleum, deep in shadow—except at one corner where the moonbeams graze it—in which all the bones of all the Howards lie entombed; watching the poplars trembling, with sharpened outline, above the many little streams that thread about the bottom of the hill; and hearing the nightingale in the zone of trees about me, flooding the silence with her copious song.

I saw a very pretty picture as the train just passed Bechworth. In a field of clover there is a

bit of a stream running away, with gurgling laughter, under a rustio bridge, and trying to hide itself in a plantation of firs a little distance on. The bridge is made of boughs of trees roughly put together—just such a bridge as you see in pictures with lovers standing hand-in-hand upon it; or some old woman with a scarlet hood tramping churchwards over it; or a cart, piled high with fruit and vegetables, moving timorously across it; or an urchin bobbing with a bended pin patiently above it. None of these were on the bridge when we just passed it. A mild-eyed ass, white as the driven snow, stood in meditative mood gazing through the twisted sides upon his shadow in the water, evidently as well pleased with his appearance as any ass I ever saw. The quiet atmosphere of this strange little cabinet scene was charming. There was an old farmhouse, all beams and rubble, not far off, with the lightest and whitest puff of smoke rising perpendicularly through the air; and as the train whisked by, three smock-frocked labourers in the fields stood resting on the handles of their forks gazing vacantly after us until we were out of sight. It was a poem by Wordsworth, or, if the reader be an artist, a bit of Morland. The artist, however, could not have given that distant ring of the blacksmith's hammer, which—despite the paradox—heightened so much the calmness of the scene.

At Shalford, further on, I see another picture of similar quiet aspect. There is a grey fence to the right—cottage with red roof, lightly stone-cropped, behind the fence. Beautiful smell of burning wood coming from the cottage. Much green foliage, swaying, wave-like, in the background, with narrow

stone spire of a church pointing, mast-like, over it. Numbers of those red May-trees in the foreground, with a herd of heifers pastured comfortably about them. Proud old brown cow, her udder running over upon the grass, cooling her legs in a narrow brook under a hedge. Calf lapping up the spent milk at her side, to save itself the trouble of sucking, and cropping a blue-bell now and then with evident relish. Look! as the train stops, a school turns out from yonder cottage, and there come the youngsters, knee-deep in the grass, to have a peep at the engine. (Terrible monster, with its one red Cyclopean eye, and bleeding in glowing embers along the line, it must seem to them!) As we move off, the little ones clap their hands and shout with all their might, their clear trebles ringing above our roar and rush — Gentleness subduing Force.

The hedges about Shalford are a study in themselves. Some are straggling and wild, but with rich associates bursting into blue and gold about them, and here and there a poppy holding its poisoned chalice to the painted butterfly. Others are clipped and straight as in Dutch pictures, and broad at the tops as bridle-tracks. Here and there I see one *all* gorse and lilac — the soft lavender of the latter bringing out the intense gold of the former, until it all but dazzles the eye. Hedges of a year's growth I like best. The plants are scarcely strong enough to stand up straight; but you mark the robin balancing himself upon them, and poking out their daintiest shoots with luxurious discrimination. By the way, did you ever see a hedge painted accurately? I never did. The artist somehow fails

to catch that peculiar reddish outline of the twigs, which is to young healthy plants what mottled arms and rosy finger-nails are to young healthy children.

Shalford is so intensely English in the features of its landscape, that every artist should pay it a visit. The few houses round the green, the willow-shaded pond, the village smithy, the flocks of ducks and geese waddling about, the brooks edged with cresses, are all so delightfully rural that the locality lingers in the memory like a dream. A little further on, too, you see, in contrast, that noble range of Surrey Hills, rich in graduated shadows, and set here and there with ruined towers, round which the rook whirls darkling by day, and the owl keeps up the most gloomy of tu-whoos by night. Ah! those old ruins on those older ridges! Where are the hands that reared the mighty piles—the bards who sang their runes around the blazing hearth on which the red-deer hissed and crackled? Where is the Saxon king with his comely daughter of the golden locks? Where are Cedric, and Egbert, and Wolfstang, who sat on skins and rushes, and heard, with looks of wonder, the cunning minstrel turn his rhymes? If we could dig deep down below the surface—there where the herbage is the richest, and the dandelion-leaf the brightest—we should find many a white bone, many a rusty weapon. Not a few secrets lie hidden in the bosom of those ancient hills. See with how proud a reticence they hold their heads aloft, and draw the mantle of purple mist before their faces!

VII.

DOVER, AND THE WAY TO IT.

THE sea is before me—three or four vessels are on the sea. Big ship with press of dingy canvas afar off, making direct for my window, and cutting that straight line against the horizon which all ships do when you catch them fore and aft. Little yacht, with one white wing and a bit of a jib, skimming the wave, like a gull, just under big ship's bows. Long rakish steamer bound for French port, throwing out a spark-sprinkled streamer from its leaning chimney, and agitating the water into whitest foam, like the ruffled breast of an albatross. Fishing-smacks showing their pitchy ribs as the sea dandles them, and giving in the full slants of sunlight a sight of their dripping nets, so that the common little craft look to me—from this aerie casement—like boats with mail-clad warriors on board. Pleasure party in clean sharp-faced yacht, newly-roped, steering, with cheery gusts of music, in the eye of the wind—breeze catching sails aback, now and then, just to show that our friend there at the wheel, with blue flannel shirt and embroidered braces—circle of ladies about him, and brown-faced sailor grinning behind—is little better than a lubber. Bathing-machines—ugliest of objects, debauching the aspect of all sea-side places—taking slowly to

the water like gouty hippopotami. Old rickety sailor with old rickety telescope trudging the beach, looking for Cockneys who pant to see the cliffs of France. Many lights and shadows on the water. The sunshine, darting and dazzling on the ripples, seems to cover the expanse with glistening indentations like a rain of burning silver; a mass of slate-coloured cloud huddling up from the east reduces this sheen immediately under it, but increases it in the background until you might swear the Field of Cloth of Gold was being again played out on those French shores, and ten thousand lances were gathered around another Francis. There is a fine flush of blue, cold-rimmed with grey, hanging above the Castle, and throwing a bent shadow over the brow and down the face of the cliff on which it stands. That shadow, though, doesn't hide the streak of scarlet behind the balcony high up the chalk, nor do the caw-caws of the crows drown the rough martial chorus that comes to us from the jovial red-coats congregated there. See! that must be a half-furlong high—it makes one dizzy even to look *up* at it—and yet so clear is the air that the little tables and the earthen jugs upon them are plain to an eye that has been dimming itself with small-print any time these eighteen years.

I look again from the Castle to the sea. The sun is clouded. A capful of wind is coming up under that slate-coloured hood of cloud, and a long labouring swell moves with it, and breaks with dismal plash and grating back-fall upon the beach. The panniered ass who has been carrying the sand from the water's edge to some higher part of the shore has to move off now—which he does with more than

asinine energy, but still not nimbly enough to prevent his fetlocks being caught by the foremost line of white "cat's feet" running up the shore. I like the moody look which the sea has put on now. How well that ruinous end of pier, its every separate timber tangled with pale green fungus, looks while the ocean has its sulks. The sombre clouds, and the fall of rain which is coming from them, give once more a sharpness of outline to the weed-and-water-~~4~~ rounded piles. Fishing-boats out there are now half-hidden in damp mist; sails of big ship, catching the slanting shower, gleam damply under the single bar of white showing through the clouds; Youth at the helm of pleasure-yacht has covered those tamboured braces with a pilot-coat; French boat is quite out of sight, as if it had hidden itself somewhere from the wet, and would show again when the squall was over; old sailor jerks up the collar of his coat and screws on the end of his Dollond; owner of the ass gets on its back, gabioning his legs in the panniers, and jogs homewards; streak of scarlet is still up there—safe *in* the cliff, weather, fair or foul, affects it not—but, in one minute, every other feature of the scene has altered.

The wind swells and the rain increases. The patter on the beach is very distinct. That curdled cloud there, with the jagged edge, means thunder, and that bar of gleaming grey portends lightning. I shut my window and, as I am determined to write nothing but a light and pleasant sketch this week, close my eyes to the storm and turn to the one or two notes I have of my journey here from Reigate. (Perhaps the reader would like the storm better. A storm is always such a nice thing—on paper.)

You can tell the instant the South-Eastern takes you from Surrey into Kent. It is like lifting you from a giant's shoulders and dropping you in a fairy's lap. Mind, when the fairy lifts *her* shoulders they at once proclaim, white as they are, that she is an Amazon in her way, and not unworthy to have the Ocean at her feet. Still, my figure is not a false one, Surrey, as a whole, being observably hilly, and Kent, as a whole, observably flat. Those naked shoulders about Folkestone are out of all proportion, as if—to change the image a little—our fairy had put on a hump to disguise herself, as, according to the story-books, fairies were so wont to do.

A sweet county is Kent! The smell of the hops is in the air, and, between ourselves, apart from the teetotallers, Nature looks all the better for it. What a unique sight, by the way, is a field of hop-poles when the sun is glancing through them. They flash like bamboo-canes, and, as the train flies by, each stick cuts a distinct *staccato* line upon the eye, which you don't lose for the next mile or two. When the sun is clouded, they look like a crowd of those little narrow black figures with which the pages of *Punch* used to be adorned, giving chase to each other with maddest celerity. But, after all, it is not of her hops—nor even of her cherries—that Kent is proudest. Nay, not even of her lasses, graceful as the first, red-lipped as the second. To have the edge of her kirtle kissed by the sea is her chiefest boast. Mark, as we run along the next half-dozen miles or so between this and Edenbridge, how prettily my statement might be supported as a Theory, an' it were worth the trouble, We have just passed Godstone—that station smothered with roses and

rhododendrons—and are here rushing through a flock of sheep. No red brands on *their* long fleeces—all are marked with blue, the colour of the wave. There is a team moving along there, with a fine straight line of trees behind it:—all the horses are white as Neptune's. Look at the two or three pieces of linen hung out to dry from that cottage high up the hill—the homestead to the left, where the white hawthorn is foaming all about—isn't it like a line of flags, and couldn't you imagine the cottage was "speaking" some other far away?

We have reached Edenbridge, and what a touching picture—touching in its peculiarity of atmosphere—is that immediately beyond it! There is a pond with deep, sloping banks covered with lustreless columbines, and a great cedar spreading an awning of dark green foliage above it. A tombstone is crumbling on the grass midway up the bank of the pond—and, a stone's throw further off, flows a stream, with a ruined hut upon its side, and an old boat half-hidden among the pensile rushes darkening the water. It were easy enough—so easy that the reader naturally expects it—to weave a story to fit that picture; but what more can I say than what I was told by my companion in the carriage—that an old man with a pale-browed daughter lived in the cottage; that on the warm days of summer she loved to turn her wheel beneath that dark-roofed yew; that one winter, when the snow lay thick upon the branches, and filled the wrinkles of its fine old trunk, the girl fell sick and died—died with a deep flush upon her cheek, as her mother had died before her; that the old man buried her in her favourite spot, and then hastened to join her where perennial

summer reigns, and hands and hearts are never parted? Nothing in the story? Nay, reader, there is truth in it, and surely that should count for something.

We are now at Paddock Wood. Little here calling for special note, save the attestation in one slight particular of the power in Nature to impregnate the commonest things with special beauty. There is an orchard with some grey lines of fence running through it. The leaf-shadows on these fences are a picture. The shifting light gives to each leaf a new image on the rails. A puff of wind sets these shadows dancing—while a nest with three twittering beaks thrust over it is shown in outline —mezzotint, as it were—amongst them.

We are coming upon the white ridges now. Thousands of martins find refuge in them, and there is some scant vegetation veining the chalk here and there, as if for the young birds to rest upon when they begin to try their wings. How dizzy that cow must be looking over the hedge there some four hundred feet aloft! How easily she could commit suicide had Apis played her false. She isn't ruminating upon anything of that kind, however, judging from her unmistakeable appetite for wild cabbage. At what a height she seems! That young rook has twice tried to scale the cliff and failed. As the train dashes under a tunnel I muse upon this, and endeavour to calculate the number of wingless animals I know who have held the loftiest eminences, and the number of those, *with* wings, who have endeavoured to reach them and failed. I find, in time, the number is beyond all computation, and I give up the calculation with a grin.

The landscape changes again. That is a pleasing stretch of country to the right. How gentle is that slope of grass; how spruce that whitened homestead on the hill; how well-kept and flower-dappled its little girdle of garden; how red that patch of poppies; how——

The Sea! There——through that rift in the hill: a world of cool green, foam-flecked, and with a fine cloud of mist, salt-looking and refreshing, rising from its bosom. A steady lap of waves falls with slow beat upon the pebbles, while a few drops of spray are flung through the windows of our carriage. I am at the end of my journey. That green line over there is France: these Titanic cliffs are Dover. . . . May their shadows never grow less!

VIII.

NOW AND THEN.

MR. DICKENS has, without perhaps being aware of it, very much to answer for. He has been walking through the world, scattering all kinds of beautiful Fictions about him, and the world has at length accepted them as Facts. He, more than any other man, has propagated that extraordinary fable about the convenience, comfort, and all the rest of it, of Stage-coaches. When he named the amiable and accomplished author of the "Origin of the Hampstead Ponds" after the proprietor of the Bath mail, made Sam Weller's honest ancestor a jarvy, and killed Carker of the ivory teeth upon a railroad, it was clear to the meanest comprehension that the popular novelist was no friend to Steam. I don't understand this, any more than I do Mrs. Browning's bitter taunt about our achievements in the way of Iron. I don't understand it, because, to me, there is something far more impressive—more poetic in the fullest sense—about a railway than about anything else of man's creation.

Let me give one little picture to vindicate the truth of my position. I was at Tonbridge last night waiting for the late express from London to Dover. Every one, of course, knows Tonbridge, with its fine chestnuts, its scatter of old houses,

and its stratified piles of rocks. The moon was just rising as I reached the platform, and a thin line of silver running along the tops of the trees that skirted the high-ground beyond the station. The station itself was as quiet as Death. Not a soul was there but myself, while through the gloom, the red glare of a couple of engines, shunted off the main line, fascinated my gaze like the eyes of wild beasts lurking for their prey. The clouds of white mist that occasionally veiled the angry stare, helped to bear out the illusion. So have I seen in the jungle, the hot breath rise from the curled mouth of the tiger, as the pelt of leaden bullets has brought crimson runlets down its back. But for the short fierce growl that came now and then from those engines—both waiting for the express to pass—I might have imagined myself in some dead city of Oriental fable, and expected to come anon upon groups of the petrified inhabitants. . . . The moon has now risen high above the trees, and a grey light falls along the iron rails. I can see for many miles down the road, and, as I look, I fancy I hear a low, measured panting through the darkness that closes in my vision. I step from the platform and bend my face to the rail, as, according to Mr. Fenimore Cooper, your savage warrior listens for his foe. Ugh—ugh—ugh! like the echoes of some far-off war-dance, are the sounds that throb from the iron cords. I leap quickly upon the platform, for although I know by the nature of the beat the train must be a good six miles off, the fate of Carker seems for the moment to have fallen upon me, and with that faint pulsation in my ears come the screeching wheel across my head, the lurid ashes

on my eyes, the scalding steam upon my brow, and all the other blood-freezing *et-ceteras* which go to make up that last chapter in the history of the white-fanged Reptile. As I rub my eyes to get rid of the by-no-means comfortable impression, an entirely new atmosphere falls upon the picture. In a moment—quicker than I can write those three short words—the station becomes alive. The gas in the lamps is turned up, as in a scene at Covent Garden—the windows of the station are suddenly illuminated like the cathedral casements in *Robert le Diable*—men with various coloured lanterns come hurrying upon the platform, looking, in the strange unearthly flashes that surround them, like the Satyr-revellers in that same wild opera—while, to complete the picture, the white-jacketed waitresses, tripping from the “up” refreshment-room on the left to the “down” refreshment-room on the right, stand with but the slenderest stretch of fancy for the sisterhood of spiritual *coryphées*. Ah! ring out—ring out loud bell! Here at last comes the monster Bertram—scoffing past those signal-crosses—an unholy flush upon his brow, and a shriek of baffled passion on his lip!

Stage coaches more romantic than Locomotives? 'Tis a libel and a farce, which the experience of every man who has travelled—even assuming he has had an American of whittling habits for a fellow passenger—must, of a verity, set aside. But it is not exactly with the romance of the subject that I purpose dealing just now. Somewhat lower would I take the question, and try it on what I believe are called economic grounds. In doing this, the friends of Mr. Weller must understand that I don't wish to shirk the more fanciful part of the

matter. If they say I do, I tell them at once the Stage-coach was a Swindle—an institution of the dark ages that went out with the Car of Juggernaut, the tumbril of the executioner, and the sedan-chair of Beau Nash. On the other hand, I again say the most poetic creation of man's hands is a Railway—an iron web annihilating space and time, bringing the good things of the country into the town and bearing the civilization of the town into the country. I love the Train with its hurry and its scurry—its roar and its rush—its unbending punctuality—its grim defiance of everything but "Bradshaw." I love it in the early morning when the fragrance of the fresh-cut grass comes, sweetly poignant, through the window. I love it in the dozy afternoons as it flies across the fields driving the sucking lambs from their ewes, and setting them scampering through the clover. I love it in the soft twilight when one white star blinks above the moon. I love it in the dismal night when the cresset-fires flare along the line, and the smoke-streamer flying from the funnel seems—like an enemy's standard borne with hurried triumph from the battle ground—riddled with burning shot and dappled with streaks of blood. Most of all I love it at daybreak, when the jocund Morning first peeps at us through some brief bit of a tunnel, and receives us, with a bright smile of welcome, as we bound with a shout through the other side.

But coming down to the economics of the question, as I ought to have done before, I should like to be informed, to begin with, what were the much vaunted comforts of a Stage-coach? I never travelled by one but once in my life, and if I thought I had to travel the same way again, I

should forthwith perform upon my person that pretty Japanese rite known as the Happy Despatch.

It was on a frosty morning in December, when the hoofs of the horses tinkled on the road, and as much vapour arose from their nostrils as ever came from a steam-engine, that I made the journey. There was a good fall of snow on the lower ground, and every tree appeared as if it had been looking back at Summer, and met the fate of Lot's wife in consequence. I remember I enjoyed the ride very well until we got over the first dozen miles or so—just beyond Brentford—and then (I was an outside passenger hieing to Bath) I began to feel cold. Shall I ever forget the expedition—if expedition that could be called which expedition, in a general sense, had none—from this point? In vain I took brandy-and-water like the older passengers—I got “mellow,” but couldn't get warm. I flapped my arms like the many-caped driver, I played the devil's tattoo with my feet to the annoyance of the “insides,” I blew steadily upon the tips of my fingers as if they were to be *kindled* like half-extinguished candle-wicks, I ran up the hills like a young roe whenever we got out. It was of no avail. Colder and sharper blew the wind, redder and bluer grew my nose, louder and louder waxed my imprecations. In about three hours all the caloric had departed from my body, and I verily believe a slide might have been “cut out” down my back. Of this I am sure—the tears brought into my eyes by the cold became icicles upon my cheeks, so that my countenance seemed set in splints, and all power of facial expression was denied me. Towards night an arrowy sleet came driving down, and the frozen particles

stuck about my face and clothes until I looked like a great crystallized sweetmeat, a block of stalactite, or a young mummy preserved in salt. At length the intense cold drove me to sleep, when one moment I would dream I was in the Arctic regions trying to chop up the North Pole for firewood, and the next that I was in Sierra Leone being served up, as an ice, in a monster goblet, and with a cold iron spoon stuck through my stomach. It took a long time to arouse me (the guard's horn, I was subsequently informed, having to be blown several times in the portals of my ears) at the end of the journey, and then I had to be carried by the ostler into the hotel. I remember asking to be put to bed; I remember the pretty chambermaid helping me to a room—her hair all powdered with the rime shaken from my grizzled drapery; I remember her pulling off my boots—squeezably wet at the toes—and subsequently bringing me a hot posset which I was far too ill to swallow. The next day I was removed to the house of my friends, and in about two months—equally divided between cold baths and hot blankets—I recovered the use of my limbs.

How different is travelling on a railway to all this! Here have I been running up and down this South-Eastern for the last month or so, and yet never once has my nose changed colour. Nay, more—not to follow my nose any farther and make *that* the only index of comfort—never once have I felt in danger; never once have I missed an appointment from the train being a single minute behind time, even on the lengthiest journey; never once have I been put into a carriage in which a royal prince or a bishop might not have sat and slept with comfort;

never once have I been asked for *backsheesh* by the servants; never once have I wished for a pleasanter mode of dashing through the universe.

But then what about the scenery? asks Counsel for Mr. Weller. To which I reply, that I've had that question put to me before; and my answer invariably has been, that of the many delusions entertained about the old style of travelling; that touching scenery is the greatest. Your Stage-coach always confined itself to turnpike-roads and the high streets of towns. The locomotive drives through parks, and bangs through preserves—leaps over rivers and darts under bridges—runs past hamlets and skips by churches—springs across cascades, and bounds over house-tops—flies by corn-fields and tears through forests! And then look at the railway itself—its mighty cuttings, its steep embankments, its dolorous tunnels, its graceful viaducts, its splendid stations. Under that word “stations,” again, how many good things, undreamt of in the coaching days, are hidden—lounging rooms, book-stalls, hot tea, brown stout, pale brandy, rosy waitresses? All which (I have overshot my “line” and am forced to put on the break), coupled with the wonderful celerity and still more wonderful cheapness of Railway Travelling, leaves the old fusty Coach, with its old fubby driver, far—very far—down the road.

IX.

ETHICS OF TRAVEL.

I HAVE left the sea behind me—kissed my hand to the white cliffs of Dover, and returned to town. I have learnt much from my South-Eastern expedition—something of cloud shadows, tree-anatomy, mountain forms, and landscape grouping. I know, now (or I think I know, for who shall boast of his knowledge of Nature, in whose book the “readings” are so various?) the exact angle of shadow cast by a mountain or daisy under the influence of sun or moon at any hour. I know the precise shade of green of a field of oats after a morning’s shower. I know the silvery look of the poplar on starry nights when the wind just throbs against its branches. I know, too, how the little purple hair-streak moth bobs about the giant oak, playing the maddest freaks amongst the acorns; and how like warriors the old beeches—gnarled, and knotted, and knobbed—look when the sun sets angrily behind them, and the gloaming is deepening upon the hills. I know how ebony-black the rushes seem when the twilight has fallen on the landscape, and how pleasantly the gurgle of the brook in which they grow falls upon the ear. Ah! how beautiful is Nature’s diapason in the calm summer eventide! The many-sounding buzz of bees, the twitter of birds, the tinkle of sheep-

bells, the chatter of rills, the murmur of trees, and—clear through all, like a fresh treble—the sharp ring of the scythe, as the mower whets it for to-morrow's cutting.

I have had an eye on the Sea, too, while I have been away. I think I know a thing or two about *that*. I know how it writhes under a thunder-storm, dashing itself, white-locked, against the cliffs, like Lear thundering for shelter at his daughter's palace: I know how it falls back with a sharp cry of pain and then rears up regally again, despite the rank weeds and tangle on its silvered crest: I know how it throws itself on the white crag prone upon the shingle, and sobs and moans in kingly pathos. I know how it looks on calm day-breaks when there is just sufficient breeze about to put an edge of salt sparkling foam upon the wave, and cast light clouds of spray in the faces of early bathers. I know—how well I know!—its aspect when the moon comes up at midnight—when a white scar is cleft in its bosom, and a trembling stream of light goes trickling away for miles. The old sea is familiar to me at all these times and in all these phases. I walk down to the beach, on such occasions, and run my fingers through the water as a lover would toy with the locks of his mistress. And talking about lovers and locks, suggests another sight of the ocean. It is evening, and the red aureole of Sunset imparts a divine aspect to Nature. A few ships are on the water, their sails purpling in the glowing atmosphere, and their taut cords standing out in dark yet clear asperity against the line of twilight closing in the picture. Soft and beautiful is that twilight, the dead grey flushed here and there with

faint reflections from the incarnadine clouds above. A bell from a far-off ship comes pulsing over the water, and, at the same moment, the low light of the Pharos on the opposite coast seems to rise from the bosom of the ocean like the sun-bathed bust of a Syren. For a few moments it gleams upon the vision, while, as the far-off barque vanishes, as though it had been suddenly sucked into a whirlpool, a faint sough creeps up the wave, darkness falls for the briefest instant upon the scene, and then—just over where the ship is *not*—the moon rises in ghostly splendour with a multitudinous crew of stars clustering in pallid agony about it.

All which is simply by way of preface; and now to bear out the title of this paper. I am a great traveller. I have been all round the world, like the fool in the apologue of the "Cameleon." I have supped under the Pyramids, had cold lamb in the Colosseum, strawberries baptised in sugared sherry (the only way to eat strawberries—cream is a mistake, and spoils the poignant flavour of the fruit) under the leaning tower of Pisa, oysters off the Rocks of Botany Bay, and mushrooms and beef-cutlets in the luncheon-bars of San Francisco. I have been all over England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and the Isle of Dogs. I take it, therefore, that I am entitled to speak with some authority upon matters of Travel, and it is to jot down a few maxims gleaned from my experience that I open my desk and re-nib my quill. I know how many people are running out of town just now, and how wretchedly ignorant they are of what they ought to do before, during, and after their journeys. For the present—having squandered so much space on mere prefatory

matter—I must confine myself to Railway Travelling, but may enter upon a wider range—for all modes of transit are equally familiar to me, palanquins just the same as “parliamentaries,”—at some future time.

I. The Railway Passenger should never be burdened with more than one portmanteau, which he can always take with him into his carriage. If he is not going to *stay* anywhere, he will not require more; if he is, the luggage can be sent on afterwards. Its cost of transport is next to nothing. The bother of looking after luggage, however, is something appalling.

II. The traveller should never sit with his back to the engine. Foolish people always do; but what of that? Foolish people seem to have but one end in view in railway travelling, and that is to keep their clothes sacred from speck or spot. Wise people wish to see as much of the country as they can, and a landscape is only to be properly viewed by *coming upon* it. Sitting with your back to the engine, you see nothing until you have passed it—which, by the way, has been the fate of foolish people from the beginning. As to the dust, in the first place you need not wear clothes that will easily spoil, or that you care much about spoiling (both which ends will be met by wearing those which have been spoilt already); and, in the next, you can always keep the window partially closed. I have journeyed over some two thousand miles of iron line within the last month or so without spoiling a single article of raiment, and without once having had a clinker take lodgment in my eye. Moreover, I have never missed a point of the scenery through which we

have passed, but have occasionally—from seeing so far in advance—been enabled to make pencil sketches of the more remarkable features of the landscape.

III. If you are a man, reader, never get into a carriage where there are ladies. You can't smoke if you do. If, dear reader, you are a lady, never get into a carriage where there are gentlemen. They'll laugh at you for doing that crochet-work, and tell you all sorts of horrible fictions about improbable trains that have been smashed to splinters in impossible tunnels.

IV. Don't eat much before commencing a journey. The best part of railway travelling, I think, is the little excitement of jumping out at the principal stations on the line and getting refreshment in the true Israel-out-of-Egypt sort of fashion. If you wouldn't have the bile from the jolting of the carriage, never, without you are well seasoned to it, take bitter beer at the outset of a journey. Bitter beer is a tonic, and *all* tonics are (when new to the stomach) essentially bilious. I may mention here that the finest thing to *prevent* bile is a draught of very cold water taken early in the morning. I have found this even keep off sea-sickness. What I mean by a draught is, at least, half-a-pint.

V. Refrain from those little round pork pies which figure so plentifully at refreshment stalls on all railways. The pigs that yield the pork are usually fed on the stale pies, so that is impossible to tell through how many generations the contents of a party may, indirectly, have passed.

VI. If you get soup at a station, take it at once into your carriage. At the last moment you can give the basin to one of the servants on the plat-

form. By this means, neither train nor turtle need be lost. (Mem. Soup is served hottest where the train only stops three minutes.)

VII. Always know the number of your carriage. It will save you time in coming back from the buffets, and, in the event of losing your pocket-book, or the MS. of that tragedy you are in the habit of carrying about with you, aid you in recovering it.

VIII. At the end of a journey, choose the first hotel in the place. The second hotel is always dear, sometimes dirty. A long experience enables me to say axiomatically that the chief house is always the cheapest. I never put up at a second or third-rate hostelry yet, that I wasn't badly accommodated, and shamefully overcharged.

X.

TINTINNABULATION.

I KNOW IT. Enemies will arise, and prefer all manner of evil charges against me. I shall be accused upon this essay of endeavouring to overturn the Church—of being a scoffer, a sceptic, and everything else that I am not, and have no intention of ever becoming. The Establishment will excommunicate me—cast me from its pale, and, when I die, refuse to give me Christian burial. I can bear it all. Philosophy and principle strengthen me like quinine. I have a duty to perform, and perform it I must. Bell, book, and candle shall not hold me back; and if I am ultimately buried in a cross-road with a stake driven through my chest, I can only hope that Posterity will do me justice, release me of my breast-pin, and re-inter my bones with all the honours.

In which the ringing of Bells is not to be included. That must be understood at the outset. Let those who like bells have them. I don't. I hate them worse than barrel-organs, or Ethiopian serenaders, or the man who lives at the back, and is just learning to tootle on the flute.

I want to learn how and why we have tolerated them so long. I know all the poets say about them, but I know that many centuries ago Aristotle said all poets were liars, and that what they

have sung about bells proves the Thracian was right. Take any man apart, and question him seriously about bells, and if he has a spark of honesty in his composition—and lives within a mile of a church—he'll readily confess that they rank first of all our consecrated nuisances. It is all very well for Mr. Tennyson, or Father Prout, or the late Mr. Poe, or Thomas Moore, or Mr. Longfellow, or Herr Müller, to sing about Bells, but my opinion is that when Sam Hall anathematizes them in the ballad, he speaks a great truth about a dismal abomination. There are some hard things concerning bells in "Little Dorrit;" but the author of that fiction didn't go far enough, and the brazen clappers of those mouldy old City churches—where the grass is growing on the altar-steps, and nothing seems to have vitality *except* the bells—reverberate upon the foggy air about Blackfriars as steadily and solemnly as ever.

I don't intend to give the bells so much rope as Mr. Dickens. I repeat, they are a nuisance, and if, despite our national ballad, Britons were not the most despicable slaves—to custom—that ever trod the earth, there wouldn't be a church bell in the metropolis. The case is different in the country. I love as much as any one to wander along the edge of the little river, to see the old folk jogging up the hill to church, and hear the "drowsy tinklings" of the bell in the moss-grown spire, from the other side of the stream. All that is pleasant enough, and, moreover, if you don't like it, you can very readily get beyond the sound. What will do in the country, however, will not do in town. I maintain—new as the posi-

tion undoubtedly is*—that there is nothing worse than to be deafened as we pace our public thoroughfares with the tolling of "sullen, huge, oracular bells," loud and dismal as that Venetian tocsin,

Which never knell'd but for a princely death,
Or for a State in peril, pealing forth
Tremendous bodements !

By the way, I always sympathized with Marino Faliero ; but when I recollect that the whole success of his *coup d'etat* depended upon the ringing of a bell, I'm very glad he lost the day (and his head), and that the Venetians were spared the horrors of the infernal hubbub the "storm-peal" would have created. Old Montaigne tells us that before the Florentines went to war they used to ring a bell which they called Martinella : if I had been one of their enemies, I'd have shown them no quarter after that. In striking, it should have been *bella, horrida bella* ! with me. But then, may be, the very noise affrighted their opponents—at all events, we learnt at school that the army of Clothair the Second ran away from Sens when they heard the pealing of St. Stephen's church. And I don't think the worse of them for it.

Our enemies are not to be affrighted by bells at this date. Why, then, do we retain them ? That compendious cram, Haydn, records, in his Dictionary, that bells were set up in this country as "a defence against thunder and lightning." In another authority I learn that they were intended to frighten

* It is so new, that my sagacious publishers advised me to keep this paper out of my volume. Principle wouldn't allow me. Only last night I was awakened by Big Ben—the monster !

away the devil. Now there is no real discrepancy here, inasmuch as His Mightiness from below may have generally appeared with thunder and lightning as accessories. So far, however, from Bells driving away devils in a general sense, they generally bring them to me—and very blue ones they are. But surely it is high time we turned our faces against all this superstition. Why, touching that Elemental theory, I know a church spire with a bell worth thousands of pounds swinging in it, that was so scarred and torn to pieces with lightning last summer, that it looks like the trunk of a blasted poplar. And yet when that bell was first set up it was duly baptized by the right rev. father of the diocese, and is as well known in the district as “St. John the Evangelist” as the great bell of Notre Dame is known in Paris as the Duke of Angoulême.

How we have tolerated the pest so long is a matter of marvel to me. It is partly owing to that silly creature, Nell Gwynn, who, I understand, founded a society of ringers, and left a sum of money to feast the chimers of St. Martin’s-in-the-Field. What a number of cynical things I could say about this, an’ it pleased me. The *belle* of cracked reputation paying the expense of ringing virtuous folks to church! What a hypocritical knell!

But theory and speculation apart—to come from the abstract to the concrete—have I not reason for my hatred? I was exceedingly sick last week—my head so full of oriental delirium that I was condemned to wear a perpetual turban of wet towel about my forehead. I had a glove on the knocker and kamptulicon in the passage. A boy was stationed at each corner of the street to ward off the organ men. There was

ever so much straw in the road—ever so many leeches in a punctured gallipot upon my table. At the height of my fever, Mrs. Gamp was given to understand that the slightest noise would result in something fatal. The doctor had scarcely departed, after having given this intimation, than the bells of a neighbouring church began to ring. Out they chimed, like ten thousand Normas beating upon gongs. Every stroke seemed like the blow of a hot hammer upon my forehead—each intermediate vibration like the thunderous tread of a giant through my brain. For three mortal hours the clanging was kept up. In the mean time, I sent a message to the resident clergyman entreating him to stop the pealing; but my appeal was useless: I was told, over and over again, it was quite impossible to interfere with the ringers.

For all I know there may have been a score of other invalids within the sound of those bells. Why, then, should people be cut short before their time to keep up a ridiculous and superstitious custom, and give Mr. Denison an opportunity of writing heavy pamphlets? Why should infants be awakened from the slumbers into which their nurses have found it so difficult to lull them, to humour any church bell whatsoever? Moreover, taking higher ground, why, when there is so much clamour about the holiness of the Sabbath, should men be employed in pulling ropes to the detriment of their own salvation? This last, you see, is rather a serious aspect of the matter. It is amusing to hear our reverend friend Euphas Bibbs anathematizing the poor apple-woman outside his church, while we know there is a "ghoul" in the steeple

hanging on to a rope as if he were hauling up a net of sinners. While dealing with the polemics of the matter, too, it is worth considering how very pleasant it must be to the dissenters of a district to hear the everlasting clangour of Church Bells reverberating above the steepleless roofs of their Rehoboaths and Little Bethels. Talk about the hardship of church rates—why, Church Bells are a far greater and less defensible public imposition. In fact, if all the bells in the metropolis were to be duly tried by a fitting tribunal, they would be forthwith condemned, and sentenced, one and all, to be unhung and taken to the place whence they came, on the condition of never more tormenting with their brazen tongues the unoffending ears of quiet-loving citizens.

No, Mr. Oriel, I am not a brute without any poetry in my composition, and I wouldn't rob a church of everything that is not of absolute use. I haven't lived at Oxford and felt the shadow of Pugin's Gateway upon my soul, to become such an out-and-out Goth. I haven't stood upon that dear bridge of Magdalen, and roamed among those classic meadows of Christchurch, to propound the creeds of Islington, Westerton, and the Tankard. My objection to Church Bells isn't the mere negative that they are not of use, but rather that they are a positive persecution. Besides, Christchurch would be just as sacred a pile in my estimation without that thundering Great Tom which makes Carfax shake in its shoes, and disturbs the "lashes" of its Cyclopean eye of a clock until the horologe is as much to be relied on as if it had been set by the retrogressive dial of Hezekiah.

My antagonism to Church Bells was of early growth. In fact, it has been through life a kind of disease—a sort of *bellon*, or metal colic. And it arose in this way. When I was about four or five, I used to have to attend church twice on the Sabbath. Dull and dreary was the pile—duller and drearier was the vicar. Dullest and dreariest was the bell that called me in. There was no steeple, in the true sense, to the edifice; but on one corner of the roof was a little arch of brickwork, like the open legs of a pair of compasses. Under this arch swung the bell—old, and cracked, and weazened, and with a hole in its right cheek, from the constant beating of the clapper, like the large dimples sailors will sometimes make in their countenances from the perpetual absorption of quids. I lived within a stone's throw of the church—in fact, as if to keep up the proverb, I have always resided within a yard or two of some ecclesiastical edifice or other. This, I should add, hasn't been my fault. The churches have followed me; I haven't followed the churches. Indeed, I haven't the shadow of a doubt that if I were to take lodgings on the hot ground in the Desert of Saharah, I should find, on waking up some morning, Livingstone laying the foundation-stone of a temple. Well, I lived next door to the church, and we used to take our dinner at about two o'clock. Not merely once or twice—but nine Sundays out of ten—just as the pastry was brought upon the table, that wretched little bell with the hole in its face used to begin to jingle. How I abhorred it! I regarded it as a sentient being that had a fiendish desire to keep me from puff-crusts. On week days, when no one was by, I used to go outside the church, and pelt it with

stones to my heart's content. I gloried in the feeble cry it raised, as the round pebbles flew against it, and once when a piece of brick stuck by accident in the hole aforesaid, and stopped the ringing on the following Sunday, my gratification was pretty well complete.

This was the bell that first struck the discord in my bosom. I have heard scores of others since—from the sonorous St. Ivan's at Moscow, to the dismal rock-bell of the Frith of Tay—but never anything so villanous as that tiny tinkler of—I may as well give the name—St. MARY'S. The neighbourhood, however, tolerates it now the same as it did when I was a boy, notwithstanding dustmen's bells have been suppressed by the parochial authorities, and every wandering minstrel who shows himself in the district to get a crust, is immediately given into custody as a vagabond and a nuisance.

There *are* bells, of course, to which I have no manner of objection. There is my bellibone's little gimcrack that hails from Benvenuto Cellini—a tulip with a chubby Cupid slightly flattened with age about the nose, perched upon a calyx. There is the wine-glass and spoon with which alone I can comfort my little-one when India-rubber ring, teetotum, patting on the back, and piggy-wiggy with his toes have failed. There is the lively small-voiced bell that comes—with muffins—at tea-time. There is the silver murmur of those whispering bells that hang around the infant's coral, like lilies of the valley nodding on their stem. There are the tuneful, timeless bells that bob their tiny clappers in amongst the daisies as the sapient wether goes munching up the hills. There are the sleigh-bells jingling sweetly

over the snow. There is that bell which a glass of Hock with a Koh-i-noor of ice in it will make if you shake it gently about. There are those old bells up the green convent-capped hills of Switzerland, and those older ones in quaint continental towns like Nuremberg and Bruges. There is the solemn bell at sea, when the fog is thick upon the water, and Jack on the look-out, finding he can't see half-a-dozen feet before him, trusts to God, the captain, and the compass, and "turns-in" on deck for the remainder of the watch. For all these and many other bells I have a positive affection; but with regard to those I have previously catalogued, I have no hesitation in saying that if I had my way, I'd—hark! the steeple round the corner has just broke out again, like a child suddenly awakened in convulsions, and my faculties are so crushed that I can't write another syllable.

XI.

THE TALLYMAN.

HE hails from the far north, pronounces silver without the *v*, and wears ponderous Blucher boots. In early life he was remarkable for knowing the multiplication table up to eighteen times, and having the longest string of buttons. Both seemed to come naturally to him—he was never discovered learning the one or playing for the others. As years advanced, new talents were developed. He carefully treasured his Sunday suit of clothes, grew mustard-and-cress for the neighbourhood on old pieces of flannel, and took the pledge at a local temperance league. At sixteen he came to London, was shop-boy at a City draper's, where he won the affections of his master by watering the floor of the shop in a lace-work pattern of £ s. d.'s; at seventeen he was placed behind the counter, and, in his new capacity, introduced white neckcloths into the profession; at nineteen he was honorary secretary to something or other; and at one-and-twenty, with all his blushing honours thick upon him (including a crop of intensely red whiskers) we find him promoted to a Pack, *vicé* Donald M'Crawley, absconded.

His success as a peripatetic has been fully equal to his master's expectations. When M'Crawley made off, packs were fast going out, and the more

respectable mode of pattern-books was coming into fashion. Our friend became a Revivalist at once. While behind the counter he had been the sprucest young fellow in the shop; but the moment the Pack became his mission he went into it with fulness of soul and shoulder; sloughed himself of white neck-cloth and other fripperies; put on the Bluchers herein specified; and took to the incumbrance as naturally as a dromedary takes to its hump.

The amount of business he has obtained is considerable. His processes of securing it have been various, and with just one of these, which has fallen within my range during the past week or so, I have to deal. If, in telling my story—the only merit of which will be its truth—I can convey a lesson to any little housewife who has not yet fallen under the ban of the wizard, I shall not have scratched the TALLYMAN upon my etching-plate in vain.

O, Woman! weakest of Nature's handiworks, bending before Mr. Macbuff and those delicious Paisley shawls—all at nineteen and sixpence only!—as the lily bows before a keen north wind. Alas! you are the Packman's slaves. He leads you—as children are led—with a ribbon. He breaks your iron resolution—as Armstrong explodes his shell—with a bunch of feathers. You believe in him with all your "trusting" hearts—imagine he is without guile when, gathering up that imitation poplin in a handful of folds, and putting a bale of white muslin behind it, he claps it before him, like a kilt, and swears, in good broad Scotch, that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed in stuff like that! A word in your ear, my dear deluded female. Don't believe in the Packman any more! His very name comes

from the old Saxon *pæcan*, a person who deceives by false appearances. He is a cheat: those shawls—maugre the short, shaggy fringe—are not Paisleys; and those Hoyles—those darling small-patterned lilacs—won't wash! Hand the man of inkles and eadisses over to your husband—he'll deal with him, I've no doubt; and just ponder well the brief domestic chronicle I am going to tell for your advantage.

Tom Ploughman, carpenter and joiner, with an occasional excursion into the undertaking line, married pretty little Eliza Phillips when he was one-and-twenty. Tom was just out of his time, and had some thirty pounds odd—half a vote, as we should say now—in the savings' bank. Thirty pounds isn't much to set up house with—as Mr. Bantam, of St. James's-street, is prepared to testify on his oath, if you ask him—but Tom knocked up a few things himself—(Item, a brave kitchen table of well-seasoned pine—none of your green stuff for Tom!—big enough to dance a waltz upon), and Eliza had got a little stock of cooking utensils and a prime feather-bed, given her by her mother, which only wanted a fresh ticking to make it as good as new. Prospects were therefore good, and after the wedding-dinner—leg of mutton and turnips, with a couple of bottles of South African port, and a dish of raspberry tartlets—the happy company went over the young couple's house and pronounced it a perfect little Paradise. A perfect little Paradise! I should think so. Why, that curd-white table, and that bright row of saucepan lids over the kitchen mantel—one of which, glittering as a Roman mirror, Eliza slyly took down partly to show how bright it was—as she averred—

but chiefly, I think, as *he* suggested, to get a peep at herself and see how radiant she was looking—why, those saucepan lids and that table were enough to make a Paradise of themselves, not to mention the little dresser, with its several rows of willow-pattern, and the jaunty brass-topped coffee-mill screwed upon the side. And if Tom thought the house a Paradise, he knew his wife to be an angel. What a manager that little woman was! “Dear me,” Tom used to say, “my wife can make a stew out of one bone and a ing’un.” Silly Tom! He forgot the amount of love there was in that stew, and how much better love is than gravy-beef or ketchup. At night, when he came home from work, and had lighted up his pipe (Tom didn’t go to any “institute”), he used to joke his wife a good deal about her cooking, and ask her if she thought she could make a good soup out of a beech chip, and give him a macaroni pudding if he went to the “corner” and begged a clean pipe? All which Mrs. Tom would take with a pout, as if she didn’t half like it—but she did, you know—and gravely enter into an elaborate explanation of her culinary tactics to her husband.

The house Tom had taken had four rooms. There were two up-stairs, and two down. One of these last was the little kitchen where Lizzy (Tom always called her Lizzy) reigned supreme. That was the secret apartment in which the light crusts and brown gravies were manufactured out of nothing. Tom didn’t often go into this sacred chamber—partly because his wife liked to astonish him with *results*, and didn’t care to let him be an eye-witness of *processes*; partly because Tom himself, although

he signed the marriage register with a small *t*, was a thorough gentleman at heart, and would no more have obtruded himself into his wife's "bowdoor," as he called it, than he would have gone prying through a keyhole. If Tom ever did go into the kitchen, it was to show visitors that prime table, of which, between ourselves, he was not a little proud. Indeed, I have often thought Tom considered there was some hidden virtue in his table which helped to make the pie-crusts so deliciously flaked and light; —at all events, he used to point to the little veins of white dough which had got into the grain of the wood, and say exultingly to his friends who had come to look at the chattel, "There, you see that paste: well, that's a proof my wife makes all her crusts upon it; no one can deny *that*, I should think." (Tom thought the crusts had a universal reputation, like Mr. Gunter's, and talked about them accordingly.) There was a patch of garden at the back of the house, and as Tom kept fowls, he had made a door in the wall, to allow them access to a neighbouring paddock, and it was through this door that most of the domestic traffic was done. The butcher's boy always came here for his bi-weekly orders on Saturdays and Wednesdays; the green-grocer brought his little basket of potatoes up the garden, and delivered them to Mrs. P. through the kitchen window; the baker carried his loaf in the same way; and the coalman, although he always knocked at the front door—as if the right of spilling dust along the cleanest passages had been secured to him by charter, and he was determined to maintain the privilege to his dying hour—was sent round to the backdoor, and compelled to bring the sack upon

his shoulder up the garden pathway. It was a pretty little bit of garden, too, I can tell you. There were not many flowers in it beside marigolds, for Tom hadn't time to cultivate it, and the few seeds he put in were immediately picked out by the fowls; but the marigolds themselves grew in myriads, and their soft, succulent, golden tops, stirred about by the wind, were very pleasant to look upon, and made the plot of ground appear like the very place in which the god of old had paid successful court to Danaë.

It was a sad hour for Tom, however, when he made that doorway in the garden wall. He saved his floor-cloth, but he——well, never mind; it is but a poor story which doesn't narrate itself.

It was a warm—very warm—afternoon in June. Lizzy was in the kitchen clearing away the dinner things, and singing as blithely as any little body with a clear soprano voice and a tolerable ear for music possibly could. The window was open, and the notes escaped from it and went flying over the garden like a troop of young blackbirds. Lizzy couldn't help warbling sweetly, for as she sang and worked she was thinking to herself what a beautiful thing it was to be a wife, and how possible it was—with a little planning and struggling, and a good deal of hashed mutton—to live happily on thirty shillings a week. The consideration of her own cheery position seemed to inspire her labour—her white elbow flew about until it twinkled again in the stream of sunshine pouring through the lattice, and the little stewpan she was polishing shone beneath the leather like so much silver, reflecting, in a bo-peep sort of manner, those rosy twins of cheeks, glowing now from the warmth of the weather

and her own exertions as they did with new-born happiness on the evening of that tour of inspection round the kitchen. The stewpan was bright enough at last, and Lizzy put it down, rolled up the leather and whitening, deposited them in a basket, and turned round to take up the pan, when—as if it were the plate of a photographer—she distinctly saw the face of a man with a goodly crop of red whiskers and a mass of black bundle behind them, smiling up at her from the lid. Lizzy gave a slight bit of a start and a slight bit of a scream, but recovering herself in a moment, asked the obtruder what he wanted. Would she make a purchase? No? Then would she oblige him with a glass of water, and allow him to tie up his pack on the grass, as the strap had given way as he came along? He was much obliged—what beautiful weather it was—rather too warm, though, for *his* work—and then down went the pack, and in a moment its varied contents were lying, a confused mass of colours, in the sun. Lizzy was but a woman. She rested those white arms on the window-sill, and looked at the things with admiring eyes. “What is the price of that?” she at length asked, as a pretty spotted necktie—just fit for Tom—was flashed dexterously before her eyes. The price was too large, and Lizzy shook her head despondingly, and said, with a smile, it was far above her means. Not at all—she could pay for it whenever she pleased. Wouldn’t she take it with just a few other things for herself? It was very hot; he wanted to lighten his pack; and would let her have them dirt cheap.

Why go into the *genesis* of that purchase? The necktie, the shirting the sheeting, the dress for

afternoons, those half-a-dozen pairs of tiny socks, and that roll of diaper—warranted a good dozen lengths—came to three pounds sixteen shillings and sixpence; and, bless your heart, ma'am, what is four and sixpence a week? "Our rule," continued Macbuff, to his new customer, "is eighteen pence in the pound; but as it's the first dealing, the sixteen and sixpence shan't reckon."

The Packman had no sooner moved away, than Lizzy began to repent of what she had done. It was a very large amount, and she wondered would Tom scold. She couldn't bear that. She would save the necktie till his birthday—the bill would be paid before then—and, when she gave it him, tell him all about the purchase. And so she went up-stairs—not a bit like the merry thing she was half-an-hour ago—put the "bargains" carefully away at the bottoms of her drawers, sat on the side of the bed and had a good cry, and then went down to set the tea-things. I am not going to tell you that when Tom returned home that same evening, he informed his wife he had lost his job. That wouldn't be true. The time did come, though, and that before the bill was half paid, when the poor fellow brought home the terrible piece of news. His lip trembled a good deal when he told it, "for," said he, turning up his cup, as he always did when he had finished his tea, "I've noticed, Liz. that you haven't been looking the thing lately. I don't think you get enough comforts for a woman in your condition, you know; and that's what it is, pr'aps, that makes you so precious dull."

Ah! dull enough had she been lately. Tom's work had not stopped all at once. It had been gra-

dually falling off, and hard-had been her struggles to pay that weekly tax upon the straitened income. For the last three weeks, indeed, the Packman had received nothing at all, and had created a pretty disturbance in consequence. Why did she have the things if she couldn't pay for them, and didn't choose to be *civil*? What did she mean by offering them back for the balance of the bill? Did she think he was a fool? With much more of similar import. What she would do now, Heaven only knew. Having kept the secret so long, it was impossible at that period to tell Tom; and so, when her husband began to talk to her about their prospects for the future, she pleaded illness and went to bed. Poor Tom was used to this. Those delightful little conferences after tea—those jokes about the soups and puddings—had been all over for some time. The secret so weighed upon Lizzy's mind that she couldn't look her husband in the face. She was always pleading illness now, and always retiring to her chamber. Her dress had never been made up; in fact, she would have thought it a sin to wear it while Tom's pay and Tom's meals had been gradually getting less and less. She had certainly looked at the socks once or twice, but every time they seemed to become coarser, until at last she thought when little Tom arrived she should hate to see his mottled legs showing through their clumsy network.

That night Lizzy cried herself to sleep, and when Tom went up-stairs and saw the damp traces upon her lashes, he called himself a Brute, as if he had been the cause of all the short work and had at length culminated the iniquity by throwing himself entirely out of employment on purpose. She seemed

so lovely lying there in her sadness, that it broke his heart to look at her. Her dark hair had escaped from its band—a little strip of blue velvet Tom had given her years ago—and flowed about the pillow, and her arm hung low over the side of the bed, the frilled wristband ruffled up and still moist with the tears that it had wiped away. He sat down on a chair at the bedside and thought how gloomy things looked for the future. Autumn had set in, and the trade was not likely to be brisk again till after Christmas. Well; there was one thing he was thankful for. Hard as had been their living for the last month or so, they had managed to keep out of debt. That was something for congratulation, and so Tom, as he pulled off his boots, thanked Heaven devoutly, and trusted he might find employment before any liabilities were incurred. Next morning he was up with the lark, and out looking for a job. He walked many and many a weary mile that day, and when he came home at night, thoroughly jaded and out of sorts—for his search for work had been in vain—his Lizzy was in bed, with the painful knowledge gnawing at her heart that *now* those little socks were useless!

When poor Tom saw his wife stricken down, and the next-door neighbour seated by her bedside, he guessed what had happened, called himself a Brute again, rushed down stairs into the kitchen to conceal his grief, leaned his head against the wall, and sobbed away like a child. But Tom was a man, and soon girded up his spirits. He brushed off his tears with the back of his hand, and was moving towards the door, when his eye caught the table. There it was—the pride of his heart—smashed to pieces, the

white splinters lying about the room, and there by its side were the halves of a Packman's stick which had been broken in the middle. It was all a riddle to Tom. He passed his hand across his forehead, and went up-stairs.

White as snow, his poor wife fell upon his neck. When her emotion had subsided, she pointed to the stock of drapery heaped upon the bed, and, trusting to his brave, good heart, sobbed out her Secret. "And so to-day," she ended, "when I told him you were out of work, and that I didn't know how to pay him, he put himself in the wildest passion, called me bad names, Tom, and beat his stick upon the table until—until—I recollect no more!" Her grief was very sore; and her husband—who had not yet spoken—was fain to lay her head upon the pillow. *He* was awfully white, even to the lips. He took the pile of drapery in his arms, as if to carry it away. In so doing his eye caught the little pairs of socks. The things fell from his hands; the colour flashed into his cheeks; he threw himself upon the bed, pressed his lips to the burning temples of his wife, and, like a great manly soul that he was, murmured, "Lizzy, I forgive you!"

Need I add that Mr. Macbuff—who was slightly the worse for liquor on the occasion of that last visit, having been occupied during the morning on a Temperance Committee—never gave Tom Ploughman the pleasure of making his acquaintance? The Tallyman didn't call again. He is still at large, however, seeking—like other wolves of the Pack—for future Lizzies to devour, and is only to be kept at bay by active bulldogs and pails of water.

XII.

A FEW OPERATIC RECOLLECTIONS.

IN recording these reminiscences of some of the operas I have seen, let me begin by saying that I have *not* seen any of the works performed this season at Drury-lane. Between ourselves, reader, I don't think Italian Opera has any business at Drury-lane. If E. Tyrrel Smith really wished to serve the Lyric Muse, why didn't he take her to her ancient temple—Her Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket? I know that house has of late years shown a propensity for suddenly shutting up (like an old Gibus), but still it is the natural home of Italian Opera, as any one may see who studies that plinth running along the top, where old fogies sawing away at violoncellos and young Corydons tootling burstfully on flutes are mixed with undraped gods and goddesses—vine-leaved about the brows in true Italian style—in the delightfulest confusion.

Noble old house! Every time I pass it I heave a perfect gamut of sighs to think to what a state of dust and desolation it has come at last. There it stands like some old Italian noble who has seen better days, and whose pride is too great to let him take to anything below his ancient rank. I would

give a little to see the interior now. Where are those amber-coloured curtains which threw a ray, as of sunshine, across the brow of Beauty in her blaze of diamonds, white shoulders, and red camellia? Where is that crimson ceiling which flushed the waistcoats of Beauty's votaries lolling, languishing, and lorgnetting in the stalls? Why, the curtains have gone to Nathan's, and been turned into masquerade dresses, and the ceiling lies enshrouded in dust and cobwebs that all the water in the iron tank upon the roof could not wash off. As I sometimes stroll along the Haymarket early in the morning, for the sake of old associations I make a point of walking under the Piazza. I invariably see the watchman standing at the stage-door just as he did in the days when the gazelle-like Cerito drew hundreds to the stalls. In the small hours all the roar of "life" is at the other end, and that Piazza seems, from very contrast, as quiet as some old palatial street in Venice. I almost fancy the sentinel is a fossil, like those Roman soldiers who were discovered at the doors of the Amphitheatre at Herculaneum.

After this bit of symphony, I come to the *motive* of my paper. I have seen many operas—heard most of the "swans" and "nightingales" who have, of late years, winged their flight to these shores. The simple yet scientific grandeur of Beethoven, the passionate tenderness of Mozart, the dusky magnificence of Meyerbeer, the fairy-like imaginings of Mendelssohn, the weird grace of Weber, the lyrical luxuriance of Donizetti, the half-agonizing stress of Bellini, the cold chiaro-oscuro—the massive grey colouring—of Spohr, the dazzling efflorescence of

Rossini, the defiant rhapsody of Verdi, the chromatic brilliancy of Auber—are all tolerably familiar to me. Not *unfamiliar* are the styles of our lesser masters. The bold, yet fanciful, enunciation of Berlioz, the melody of Adam, the mysticism of Schubert, the fantastic playfulness of Herold, and the stark madness of Wagner, have worked their several influences upon me.

I cannot know the composers without, at the same time, knowing something of their interpreters. The nobly-cultured Viardot, the impassioned Grisi, the impetuous Cruvelli, the soul-searching Lind, the glowing Alboni, the polished Persiani, the silvery Sontag, the exquisite Bosio, have, on occasion, fired my blood. The later stars—from the piquant Piccolomini to the saintly Santi—saintly because so young, so fair, so wondrous white of brow, so meekly sweet of voice—have also sent the “arrows of their silver sphere” into my heart. And then the men. Let me see, whom have I heard? Well, amongst a thousand others, the unctuous Lablache, the sonorous Formes, the stately Staudigl, the mellifluous Graziani, the all-perfect Tamburini, the artistic Ronconi, the flute-voiced Mario, the robust Tamberlik, the correct Calzolari, the plaintive Gardoni, the smooth Giuglini, the tender Reeves.

May I then claim to say a word or two about operas? Will you, reader, allow me to tell you, with becoming brevity, which I consider the best single scenes (for I am only going to take single scenes just now) ever presented on the lyric stage? I might also tell you the worst, but everybody who has heard that melody-forsaken *Satanella*, must know the worst without telling.

Beyond everything else, as a piece of musical inspiration, I submit, is that burial scene in *Fidelio*. See this with Sophie Cruvelli in it—see her, a sad and solitary figure just breaking through the surrounding gloom of the prison, digging the grave in stolid despair, like that nun in Mr. Millais' last picture, and you may then make your will and quit the world in peace.

The last scene but one in the *Huguenots*—when Raoul wishes to tear himself away from the unhappy Valentina—when the awful tocsin is pealing with measured distinctness outside, contrapuncted with the shrieks and groans of the martyrs—when, at the last intense moment, Valentina falls with her face upon the floor, and Raoul leaps with a shriek through the casement,—must be allowed to rank next.

Then (as I purpose reserving *Don Giovanni* for a special paper) comes the Coronation in the *Prophète*. The grand march—the false prophet's ascent of the throne—the anguish of the mother, horror-stricken at the blasphemy of her son—her tremulous denunciation of his unholy pretensions—his subtle master-stroke, when, calling upon his followers to put their lance-heads to his bosom, he commands the terrified woman to repeat her words—the struggle in her breast between maternal fondness and religious duty—the gradual triumph of Love over Faith—the tearing away of the mother by the rude soldiery—the triumphant song of the Impostor, as he waves the banner from the topmost step of the throne—the judgment of heaven when, the next instant, the throne topples and splits asunder—when the False Prophet, with the false banner still waving above his head, vanishes through the fiery fissure,

and a victorious burst of music seems to rise from the lowest abysses of the nether hell. Go, witness that at Covent Garden, reader, and you will then say there is but one Meyerbeer, and Mario is his "Prophet."

That is a fine scene in *Lucretia* where the guilty woman is compelled to administer the poison to her son, and cannot afterwards induce him to take the antidote. Much noble singing and passionate acting have Grisi and Mario given us in this; but a great deal of the intense interest of the position is lost from its resemblance—a resemblance simply dramatic, mind you—to the great scene in the *Huguenots*. What a perfect cabinet opera is this *Lucretia*, and what a brilliant bit of Flemish painting—dashing, and brave, and flushed with wine—is young Orsini. Have you seen Alboni in that character? No? Then you haven't seen the character at all, and so you had better not say anything about it. You've seen Didiée? Well, Didiée is very well, but she is to Alboni what a tame young noble by Leslie is to a young patrician from the magic pencil of Giorgione.

What a glorious scene is that in *Il Barbiero*, where old ponderously-frilled Lablache used to fly about like another Caliban invested with the mercurial attributes of Ariel, and where the bewitching Sontag used to drop her little rose-blush hand behind her (the taper fingers falling below her sleeve like the petals of a fuchsia from its calyx), and seize the precious *billet*. For verve and colour, for elegant badinage and sparkling humour—was there ever such another comic opera as this?

Essentially great—although critics of the heavier stamp might not be disposed to admit it—is that

sleep-walking scene in *La Sonnambula*. Very chaste and beautiful is the music—very chaste and beautiful are the surroundings. There, across that moss-grown mouldering plank, walks the sleeping Amina in her snow-white dress, and with the bouquet of flowers, Elvino's last gift, upon her bosom—

“An agate lamp within her hand,”

which throws a sad gleam of light upon her face and a pale aureole around her forehead; and there below are the simple villagers upon their knees—the Count standing in the centre with uncovered head—beseeching, in solemn undertone, the Virgin to protect her. Then how artistically is the scene worked up; the turning of the wheel, the breaking of the plank, and the fall of the lamp—symbolical of Amina's love!—in the raging torrent beneath. What a pathetic prayer is that *Quanto infelice*, which she offers for Elvino, and how touching is her grief over the flowers when, wet with tears, they fall—as her hopes have fallen—through her fingers to the ground! The climax, too, is finely wrought, from that gay chorus of villagers when she first awakens and recognises Elvino, to the delirious *Ah non giunge*, with its light dance-like accompaniment of stringed instruments, with which the opera closes.

Which shall rank next—the last scene in *Norma*, when the fatal gong is struck, the dark-robed Druids come trooping in, and the erring priestess, with a pale agony on her forehead, sternly ascends the pyre; or the catastrophe in *Robert le Diable*, when the floor opens, tongues of flame come licking round the prostrate body of the Tempter, and the wild shriek of Alice echoes despairingly along the roof? I don't

know. Both reach the same high altitude of excellence—musical, dramatic, and artistic; each is the culmination of a grandly-conceived and finely-sustained production. I often fancy what rare and ethereal natures these Bellinis and Donizettis must possess—how nearly allied to pain must be that exquisite sense of harmony which lives ever with them as the murmur in the shell. When I know that the composer of *Norma* died before he was thirty, I can scarcely refrain from kicking my good friend Tomtom—to whom, in the words of Scott, music is as good as any other noise—when he dares to tell me, as he often does, that all men are born alike. Heaven forbid!

XIII.

STEAM-PUFFS.

PUFF THE FIRST.—I am waiting for the train. Having to leave the London-bridge Terminus of the South-Eastern Railway at 8-30 a.m., and staying just now some four miles distant, I have scarcely been able to close my eyes all night for fear I should not wake in proper time. I "fell off" once, at about four, but having placed my watch under my pillow, had such awful dreams of tarantulas crawling over my head, centipedes worming themselves into my ears, and crickets holding chirrumpy riot upon my forehead, that I quickly awoke with a start, and jumped out of bed. As I shaved myself, I swore a solemn vow that if ever I had to travel at the impossible hour of Eight-Thirty again, I would sit up for it, rather than pass through the miseries of another sleepless night. Moreover, I find I have arrived at the station a good five-and-twenty minutes too soon, and that I might just as well have walked as been jolted to the verge of dislocation in that dirty night-cab, with the tattered bits of red silk blind to the windows, which has just robbed me of a shilling above the legal fare. As the ticket office is not yet open—as the iron horse which is to take me to Dover has only just begun to snort—I make my way to the Refreshment bar. Not that I am

either hungered or athirst; but then spare time at a railway station—like an interval at a theatre—has, as long as I remember, been dedicated to tankard-and-trencher service.

PUFF THE SECOND.—The iron horse is neighing with all his might. Let him. I must have the news, even if he should start without me. With my pockets stuffed with papers, I jump into a carriage, just as the train begins to screech along the line. There are several persons in the compartment already, and I notice—as I have noticed hundreds of times before, not only on railways but in omnibuses—that they all look with a frown upon the last arrival. A puffy, pimpled old gentleman in a corner-seat, with his back to the engine, has put his rug upon the only vacant place, and it is with no slight persuasion I can get him to remove it. He says people who travel—young people especially—ought to be in time, and not disturb folks who are punctual—a sentiment in such strict accord with the views of the rest of the company, that they give a murmur of approval, and Gorgonize me for the next twenty miles or so with a petrifying equanimity. As I am reading the paper I don't much care; and presently an opportunity arrives for paying off old Blowbellows. As soon as we have passed the Crystal Palace, he takes out his cigar-case, and, having made a general inquiry if any one objects to smoking, and receiving a shake of the head from all but myself (I am apparently deep in the City article of the *Times*), begins to diffuse a fine aroma through the carriage. How the old fellow enjoys the weed! He fixes his eyes steadily upon it, and watches the white ash, crimson-petalled, bloom upon the twisted leaves, with the

admiration of a first-class connoisseur. The train flies on, and the blue curls of incense float through the window into the clear bright sunshine until they are lost—as I have seen your fine cerulean natures vanish in the hot fogs of life—in the white clouds of steam whoo-ing from the funnel. The old gentleman has consumed, I should say, about half of his cigar, when the grey ash, hitherto unbroken, is jerked from the end by the stopping of the train at Red Hill. He whisks the dust from his trousers with his kerchief, takes the cigar from his mouth, and places it upon the arm of the seat. "Is this Red Hill?" I ask naively. "Yes," says the old fellow, a palpable edge of grumble vandyking the word. I go to the window and call a guard, as if to be let out. Blowbellows gives a sigh of relief, and makes up his mind that he will have my seat to rest his legs upon. The guard comes, and is about opening the door, when, putting on a mixed expression of nausea and indignation—like the look of a wife when she turns out her husband's Havanna-reeking pockets after the "little dinner" at the Star and Garter over night—I stand aside, point to the burning cigar upon the leathern elbow of the opposite seat, and ask if the company allows its property to be destroyed and its passengers to be suffocated by madmen and incendiaries? Poor old Blowbellows! The guard had him (and his rug) out of the carriage in a moment, and as I saw him led away, with a purple fury on his forehead, I threw myself into his snug corner, and rested my feet upon the cushion I had previously occupied.

PUFF THE THIRD.—I have suddenly become a hero. All the other occupants of the carriage are

congratulating me on having had the "disagreeable old fellow" ejected. A slim, saintly gentleman—close-vested and white neckclothed—who had particularly relished that rebuke about my lack of punctuality, says, "It certainly served the smoking man right for his uncharitableness to our young friend when he came into the carriage"—and would, Young Friend lend him the *Times*. But Puff the Third has brought us to —, and, to avoid further compliments, I get out for a glass of sherry.

I find the waitresses are grim and business-like, and that the sherry has an undeniable South-African accent. I eat one of those little round meat-pies, which you can't find anywhere else and can't *help* finding at railway buffets, and then move to the book-stall to purchase the current number of *All the Year Round*. I am not naturally a fault-finder—it takes a good deal to put me out of temper. That newsman, though, at —, would provoke a saint. His sole aim in life seems to be to disappoint customers. Ask him for a *Times*, he palms off a *Tankard*—request a *John Bull*, and he gives you a *Bell's Life*. Tell him he has made a mistake, and he flatly says you don't know what you want, and refuses to serve you at all. When I come *from* Dover, I have a perfect dread of this man. Traveling by the early express, — is about the first place where you meet the day's literature, and of course there is a rush for the papers. The imperturbability of the fellow irritates you like the pouring of sand down your back. You run to the stall with your sixpence, and the moment he sees you he fixes the point of his elbow in the centre of his pile of papers, rests his chin on his hand, and looks at

you with an impudent indifference, which I know will some day force me to seize him by the throat and hurl him under the wheels of the train. Sometimes he will have a throng of passengers round him ; and having on such occasions discovered, by a few quick glances, who are most desirous of securing the leading journal—his stock of which is always limited—makes up his mind that not one of them shall have a copy. The consequence is that the only safe way to obtain the paper is to stand apart from the group, and appear not to want it. You will then have one passed right over the heads of the crowd and thrust into your hands. Woe betide the man who, having got the paper itself, dares to ask for the supplement. The damp sheet is torn from his fingers, his money thrown on the board, and if he were to go on his knees to get the incomplete paper back again, the fellow would laugh him to scorn. I sometimes wonder does the *Times* itself know that it is sold in a decapitated form, or, if it does, are the *advertisers* aware of the fact ? Surely, when Lavinia pays a half-guinea a line from her scanty stock of pin-money to inform Augustus that she intends to be at Almack's on the 12th ; surely, when the fond Mrs. Codlington entreats her dear boy Samuel to come home and be forgiven ; surely, when little Mrs. Bubbs prays that brute of a husband to return without delay, as she is starving and baby is far from well ; surely, when Cqnqlx asks Wkgqzh if 40 saw *†§|| tzq at xxtqqqls—it is naturally expected Augustus, Samuel, Mr. B., and Wkgqzh, cannot purchase the paper without seeing the announcements intended for them in that mysterious second column.

PUFF THE FOURTH.—When we leave —— I get

into a fresh carriage. There are two other inmates, and I find them far more agreeable than my late companions. One is a Frenchman with a fine, handsome moustachioed face; the other a young English girl, who is evidently his new-made wife. It is very beautiful to mark his devotion to her—to see him wrap his cloak about her feet, and place her with her back towards the engine, so that the wind coming through the half-opened window shall not visit her too roughly. He is very fond of her I can see, while she is “pale from her love of him.” He points out (all foreigners are artists, more or less,) the iris-eyed pheasant pecking among the young wheat, and the elastic bound the rook makes whenever it alights. I am almost sorry that I came into the carriage; but we all three soon get into conversation, and become so friendly with each other that, before we reach Ashford, I know the young lady is a runaway bride, fleeing from the wrath of a rich, obdurate, frog-and-Frenchman-hating parent. I am sure I see nothing in the Frenchman to dislike. There is a frankness in his brown eyes, a honesty about his fine ruddy lips, that would charm any girl with a heart.

PUFF THE FIFTH.—We are at Folkestone, where the happy pair get out. I make up my mind as soon as I arrive at Dover that I will drink a health to that Anglo-French alliance. When the train quits Folkestone, which it does in about a minute, I am left to myself. Of course, having had a respectable individual turned out of a carriage early in the journey for smoking, I light a cigar. As I am whiffing away, one or two thoughts connected with railways and railway travelling pass

through my mind. I think of the greatness of the works themselves, of the vast amount of money lying beneath our iron roads; of the comparative ease and safety with which they are managed. (Long before Mr. Eborall or any of his clerical staff were at London-bridge this morning, trains were coming in and going out with a regularity that makes the phrase "like clock-work" for once a veracious expression.) I think too of the wonderful care required in the management of those signals which we see dancing, like lurid meteors, through the darkness, as we fly along the line at night. I think what a blessing it is that the train never waits for any one, and how the punctuality of the many great lines which spider-web the country must be working its effect upon the national character. At this point (we are just rushing through that Alp-like pass which preludes the Shakspeare Cliff) I think of the change which these iron roads have made in war. I see the martial bands of France borne, as with the quickness of thought, to the village of Magenta—I see those "open carriages, roofed with leafy boughs," carrying away the dead and wounded to Milan the morning following the battle. I see the sunbeams darting through the umbrage and grazing many a reddened forehead, many a death-set lip. But we are through the Shakspeare Cliff, and in less than another minute shall be at Dover.

PUFF THE SIXTH.—A smart man is the railway ticket-porter. He knows at a glance whether the fellow fumbling among a heap of papers taken from his side-pocket ever had a ticket or not. He perceives, by a sort of instinct, that the little bundle in

the corner doesn't belong to you, but was left by that passenger who got out at the last station. He shakes his head significantly as he takes your second-class ticket; regrets exceedingly that you should have got into the wrong carriage, but will trouble you, if you please, for five shillings and seven-pence. An astute man, well read in humanity and Bradshaw, he never sacrifices the interests of "the line," as he calls it, or the dignity of the passengers. Not that he is without his provocations. I was travelling on the Eastern Counties some months ago, and was much annoyed throughout the whole journey by a big portentous-looking fellow-traveller, who divided the carriage with me, and who, falling into a sonorous sleep soon after we left London, continued to snore in the loudest possible key until we reached our destination. When the train stopped the ticket-porter came into the carriage, and, after one or two milder endeavours to awake the slumberer, shook him gently by the shoulder. I shall never forget the fellow. He was on his feet in an instant, and in less than another the porter was on his back. I believe to this hour the sleeper was champion of the heavy weights, and that he must have been dreaming some one was trying to rob him of the belt.

PUFF THE LAST.—We have moved from the ticket-platform to the station. In less than two hours and a half we have made the run from London to Dover, and I am now standing on the beach letting the breeze blow the foam into my face. A few "white horses" are racing over the sea—a few ships are riding the horses. Knots of brown-hatted damsels with their heavily-dressed escorts are pacing

the parade, and a German band is sending a martial strain across the waters. There is a newly-painted screw just getting up its steam for a holiday trip to Margate, the after part of the deck already chalked for dancing, and the captain leaning against the mast with a sprig of foxglove in his button-hole. Well, the more I see of Dover the more I like it—the more am I convinced that nature never intended it for any other people than ourselves. For see— notwithstanding it is only divided from France by that “thin streak of sea-sickness”—there isn’t a more thoroughly English place under the sun. It is English in its population, its respectability, its beef, its hotels, its London pickles, its fish sauces. Mr. Frenchman has been trading backwards and forwards for fifteen centuries, and hasn’t displaced a single British custom yet. I don’t like to boast—it is so common, so characteristic of our island impudence—but the brine has been blowing in my face, and I can’t help feeling that I am descended from those old Northmen whose home was on the seas—those invincible Vikings whose sceptre was the trident. Let an armada come to-morrow—our pale-faced cliffs shall hold it at defiance!

XIV.

A NOR'-EASTER.

A SKY the colour of Isabella lace (sun had set long ago, and sky had sworn to wear its garb until he showed once more at the portals of the Orient); rain, thin and sharp, and coming down aslant, so as to send its chilly drops direct into the ears of hurrying pedestrians; ground sodden to the gravel stratum, and broken into little puddles, dented, like colanders, beneath the shot-like pelt of rain; pavement plashy and reminiscent of each traveller's sliding footstep; wind, sheer-edged and squally, with an impudent whistle coming in betweenwhiles, like the Charitable Grinder's call for "strays" in the midst of Mother Brown's indignant bluster,—or, if it will suit my friend Fasciculus better, the long-drawn wail of the jackal as the thunder booms above the Seven Hills—under such a sky, with such a rain, and such a wind, came in the Easter Holidays of this present year of grace, eighteen-hundred-and-fifty-nine.

I know the reason, too. The metropolitan candidates had debauched the "festive season" by calling meetings for Easter Monday night. The weather wouldn't stand it. From time immemorial Easter had been passed over to the players. It ranked in the green-room next to Boxing-night; and, with the exception of that election in which

Caius Marcius and his astute agent Menenius were concerned, the hustings had never once been obtruded before the footlights.

With a stolid determination, therefore, the wind and rain set in—or, more correctly speaking, the wind and rain walked out. The sky, as I said, took that disagreeable bilious tint—as if Nature had some liver affection—which it never wears in any other country under the sun. A heavy, palpable mist hung over the water, and gathered itself about the dome of St. Paul's until it became dim and indistinct in outline like a blurred slide in a stereoscope. The Thames looked cheerless and uncomfortable, as the Styx in a fog. A stray steamer was to be occasionally seen darkening the already murky atmosphere with its cauliflower-head of smoke, and stopping at the rotten old piers on the Lambeth side to take up solitary passengers, or give mysterious-looking baskets into the hands of more mysterious-looking persons in fan-tail hats and limp Mackintosh overalls.

How different to the Easter when *I* had a run up the river to Richmond, and rowed myself back to Temple-stairs as the sun was westering in the heavens. It was a delicious day, with just sufficient breeze about to ruffle the surface of the water, and shake those cool green reeds which edge the river at Fulham with a dim, mysterious kind of rustle, as if a Syren lay singing in their midst. The Thames was covered with boats—boats of every variety, from the smart shallop, pranked out with flags and streamers, to the small, black, battered wherry that, at some date or other, Charon must have ferried; and which has worked between Chelsea and

Battersea for any time these ten years, carrying souls from the dingy streets of the one to the pleasant fields of the other at the wonderfully low rate of a halfpenny. There were scores of steamers out, too, that day, with lusty bands on board, and cheerful little dancing parties on the after part of the decks. That *was* an Easter. We weren't bothered about politics then—nor were our hearts and eyes inflamed with six-foot posters in every coloured ink stuck about the public thoroughfares. Why, on Monday last, when I sent for a cab to take me somewhere—anywhere away from the dingy heart of London—a fellow comes with a flaming placard on his vehicle, and while he is fastening the door, asks me if I can't give him a "drain" and a vote for Doulton. And yet folks wonder that things are going wrong in the world, and that wars and rumours of wars are helping the sale of Dr. Cumming's prophecies to an incalculable extent.

As I was driven about, I could scarcely refrain from cheering the determined attempts of some of my fellow citizens to be jolly, maugre the cold, and the wind, and the rain, as Balder's wife says in the poem. I met a party—an old Greenwich pensioner, with a string of grandchildren dogging at his heels—in the bend of the Old Kent-road, over against the "Swan," and the sunshine of that old fellow's face sheening through the rain-drops trickling off the eaves of his hat, was enough to have set a permanent rainbow on his forehead. The children (they were all boys—four of them—the oldest twelve, perhaps) had evidently been wet through once or twice during the morning—for their clothes hung stiffly about them, like Millais' draperies, or a Maskin-

tosh that has been damp overnight—but they were hardy urchins, fit for flood and field, like their grandsire, and went tramping along, eating gingerbread and cracking nuts to their little hearts' delight.

Further on, near the Elephant and Castle, a marriage party flashed before the window of my cab. The bride, rosy with blushes, looked happy as a queen. The goodly bough of orange-blossoms had been deluged with the rain, and the bunch of flowers in her bosom was glistening with the drops that fell from her saturated veil. What of that? She had her husband at her side—a portly, broad-shouldered, red-vested, brawny-fisted, honest-faced fellow enough—and the veil and orange-blossoms had served their purpose. Ah! my dear friend, Fasciculus—surely you need not laugh at those drenched orange-blossoms. There are plenty of them in that fashionable district of yours, which, though dry as tufts of wall-flowers from the pyramids on the wedding-day, have been drenched through and through with scalding tear-drops since! So, at least, would tell you the satirist of "Vanity Fair."

At the corner of the Westminster-road I come across a bevy of youngsters in a covered van. Notwithstanding the rain is rattling like peas upon the tarpaulin, and the wind lifting it up like a stage wave at Drury-lane, Youth has its song and its shout; and laughter, fresh as the gurgle of a brook over the pebbles, drowns the agonised creaking of the old wain's wheels, and almost makes the day seem pleasant. At the tail of the cart are some goodly stone bottles, clanking together, and, peeping from under the feet of the pleasure-takers, ends of

hampers so full of something or other that the lids are arched like raised pigeon pies—those tiny feet “cocked up” on them rather helping to bear out the illusion. The van I know is bound to Epping Forest—where I trust the little folks won’t be smuggled by the gipsies, or catch cold on the wet grass. Look at that! My last damp thought is dissipated as by magic. As the vehicle passes, a lassie in the corner, with a face round and healthy as a daisy blossom, ties her pocket handkerchief about the throat of a little fellow—evidently one of the daisy family, too, though rather pale and pinched—in order to protect him from the weather. Oh! how soon the angel-spirit, which soothes the burning forehead and cheers the darkened chamber, is implanted in the breast of Woman! These are the buds who, in after life, blossom into Florence Nightingales.

Higher up the road I see a different company. My bile is raised by three young snobs, all with very fluffy moustachios and excruciatingly shiny Paris hats—who walk arm-in-arm and endeavour to effect collisions between their own precious persons and every well-dressed female who passes on the same side of the street. They strut along like bantam-cocks, and look like Noah Claypoles, or, still more, photographic artists. I watch them narrowly, as I would beetles through a microscope. I see them stop at a broker’s, and adjust their kerchiefs in a glass. I see them puff their smoke into the face of a little old woman selling tapes and things at the corner of a street. I see one of them pull off a boy’s cap and send it whirling into the gutter. I see boy’s father suddenly dart from a doorway, and

with one well-measured blow knock their radiant castors on the pavement, and with three well-measured kicks whirl them into the mud. It was a cheering sight. Being the first aggressors they called for a policeman, of course. Policeman comes after considerable delay, and goes into the merits of the case. Boy's cap is damaging testimony against the trio, and after inquiring with judicial gravity, if they have any questions to put, and receiving as an answer that the boy is a Lie, constable decides that "it served them jolly well right, and they'd a-better move on." I saw them—their grimy hats in their hands—turn round, and make the best of their way back. The wind played with their long gleaming hair, and the small boys of the district—who had now assembled in considerable force—derided them with "sights" and shrieks unholy.

As I pass over Westminster-bridge I get a dismal view of the river. There is the half of an old steamer laid up on the sands, which looks like a perfect boat trying to hide itself in the mud. There are a few miserable boys and old crones searching, ankle-deep in mire, for something or other along the shore; and I fancy, as I catch a hurried glance of them, they are a sort of phantom crew, waiting till that ruined old fragment of a craft shall some day put to sea.

As the rain has temporarily abated, I dismiss my cab at Parliament-street, and walk to the National Gallery. The fountains are splashing away as well as they can, but fail to entice the lion at the top of Northumberland House to come and drink. There are hundreds of people—all looking very steamy and savage—crowding up the steps of our low-looking

Louvre, and striving to get an early peep at the new picture of the "Blind Beggar," bequeathed to the nation by the late Miss Jane Clarke, court milliner, of Regent-street. It would seem, however, that this same benevolent lady, the patroness of the "Blind Beggar"—in effigy—must have fancied herself to be of porcelain clay, from the direction she left that she should be buried in vestments of point-lace.

There was a good deal of jollity, no doubt, *within* doors on Monday. Hunt-the-slipper, magic-music, forfeits, kiss-in-the-ring, and mulled port wine, were much in request. Mistletoe that had done good work at Christmas was brought out, sere and berryless, to perform fresh service. The sweet lass at-home was better than the Sweet lass of Richmond-hill. How dreary it must have been in the country—smoking cigars and reading that colossal work, the Book of Roads, in some dusky commercial room, or watching the splashing of the rain in the trickling gutters and deep-cut cart-ruts outside, thinking all the while with what a mocking creak that wooden advertisement of a "good bowling-green" and "dry skittle-ground" swung above the overflowing horsetrough. How cheerful the dinner must have been, too. That dish of chops, with the withered shrub of parsley overhanging the pool of thick, congealed gravy; that pale ale which, poured into the damp glass—every glass in the universe was damp on Monday—lost its head, and became as flat as is—proverbially—Martin Tupper's poetry, Bellew's lectures, a debate at the Board of Works, or a sermon at the Chapel Royal. Then that little mound of half-strained spinach, those three pale potatoes so black about the eyes, that omelet round which the rum *wouldn't* burn,

and those few radishes and handful of sickly cresses, that made their appearance with the half-pint of very opaque port, and the mysterious substance which the waiter called Stilton cheese. No; if London out of doors was a Purgatory—the country, either out or in, was an Inferno.

XV.

SHELL-WHISPERINGS.

THE Lounger has been sick—very sick. Too sick to read, or write, or eat, or drink, or do anything, indeed, but feed leeches and wear blisters. I am now “dotting” in a shaded room, where there are grapes and gentian on a little round table, and a pale nurse at the side turning up my youngster’s holland jacket with a thin cord of Tyrian purple. Youngster is snoring in his crib over in the corner by the fire. He was crying before he went to sleep; and his cheeks now look like roses on a summer eve after a shower has passed over and left the slightest spray upon the edges of the leaves.

I am wondering—I am still very weak—what I shall write about. I have gnawed the top of my pen, stippled rows of military men on the blotting paper—spiked any number of wafers to the bottom of the box—and drawn a tolerable profile of Mr. Disraeli on the side of my desk—but all this doesn’t help me to a subject. I think of the poor storyteller in Gerald Griffin’s delightful Romance of the Jury Room, and wish that I lived in the days when fays and fairies assisted those whose brains had lost their fires, and whose tongues refused to wag.

I have it. The doctor has just been and ordered

me to eat plenty of oysters, and to abandon writing for a month. Silly doctor! How am I to get the oysters, if I cease writing? I am going to compromise the thing: to do as little writing as I can, and eat all the oysters I can get. They have sent for some now, and, while I am waiting, let me endeavour to call up all the places in which, during my slender lifetime of four-and-twenty summers, I have eaten oysters.

The first time, of course, was *the* night I went to Astley's. Kit, and his mother, and little Jacob, and Barbara, and *her* mother (holding Mrs. Nubbles's infant) were in the next box in the same shop the same night. I had very little respect for oysters then. I thought the hind quarters of small crabs far preferable. The taste of *those* oysters, however—of that new loaf and butter, and that sip of double stout—I never can forget. The “remembrance,” as the wine-tasters say, is delicious. It brings with it clown and pantaloon, and Mazeppa (whom I mistook, at the time, for Lord Byron—I was *so* clever, my mother said) on the wild horse of the Ukraine, and the rosy-cheeked young lady who rode on one leg like an angel, and Mr. Widdicomb—who made my cheeks ache with laughter—and the little girl in spangles and a blue skirt, whom the clown tied up in his pocket-handkerchief, and carried away under his arm. Many are the plays, many are the performers, I have seen since then. But with how lessened a charm! The wand of harlequin has lost its power. I know all about Mazeppa now. I know he has three pounds a week (finding his own cords), and that the wild horse of the Ukraine does all manner of service, and

is lent occasionally by its proprietor to a neighbouring pork-butcher to grind sausages. *That* oyster was swallowed many, many years ago.

My second oysters were still more delicious. The scene is a little hut, set, like an aerie, on a jut of rock down there in Cornwall. Great crags are heaped before and behind the snug little cottage, and the sea is crooning to it all around. The frail wooden tenement sways to and fro with the wind, as if it were nodding to the *keene*-like murmur of the waters. A young girl, slim and straight and white as a wand, with her feet pink and delicate as the mouths of sea-shells, is standing by my side opening the oysters. Sweetest of Hebes! Fifteen summers had scarcely crossed her forehead, and yet the way she handled shell-fish was something rarely seen in this world. How delicately she allowed the vinegar to fall in three red drops, like garnets, down the creamy sides of the mollusc—how considerately she rained the pepper from the old steel castor on its head. For three months I lay up there at that old fishing-hut in Cornwall. I was eighteen, and I look upon those days as some of the happiest in my life. I was even then an invalid; and little Mary and I used to wander about the beach, in the still and shiny weather, and find the oysters for ourselves. Mary would gather them in her apron, with bunches of sea-weed, and wild-flowers, and curious shells, and anything else deemed worthy of taking home. Sometimes she would come to a pool lying still and green in the rock, like a Naiad in the arms of a sea-monster, and then I used to have to lift her over as well as my feeble health would permit. O! she was a sweet thing to bear about was little Mary!

I went down to see the old cottage and the old fisherman, her father, the other day. The homestead and its owner had gone to ruin. The tenement was crumbling to pieces. Grass was in the porchway, rank weeds had quenched the white stars of the jessamine which once hung round the window. The old man was wandering on the sea sand, with his white beard on his chest, and an old crabbed stick in his hand. I knew the story he had to tell me before I accosted him; but I let him repeat it, and gave him all the comforting words I could command. It is the old, old chronicle. A gentleman, suffering from a broken constitution, had been ordered to the sea-side by his physicians. He stopped in the same cottage where I had spent so many happy hours. He won Mary's heart. He seduced her. He then flung her away, and returned to his proud family in London. Mary waited a long time for letters. Months passed over, and none came. She grew ill, and the guilt of the destroyer began to show its work. Presently, she heard that he was married. They called it a brilliant alliance in the newspapers, and congratulated fashionable society that, with restored health and a young and charming wife, he had once more returned to its circle. Somehow the paper containing all this found her in her shame and sorrow. She read it—prayed God to bless him and forgive her—and then laid down and died—died very quietly, as common folks will, when all they had to live for is departed. She is buried—with her shame—on the white brow of a tall cliff close against the sea. Nothing marks the spot but a few tall weeds which have sprung up from the newly-loosened soil; but you may know the grave at night by the clear,

bland light that falls upon it from the ancient lighthouse on the neighbouring boulders. Poor Mary! Thy pearl of purity taken and the casket-shells which held it rudely cast aside!

In an old cellar by the Rhine I was whilom eating oysters with a band of choice companions, and draining Johannisberger—choice as they—from a flask of curiously twisted elk-horn. Our skiff was waiting for us on the bank; but we sat there telling stories, trilling songs in baddest German, and eating oysters until the moon rose high and strong enough to send a single finger of light into our snugger. Then we rose from our revels; pledged the white-faced goddess in a parting goblet, made for our boat, and floated listlessly up the river, while the bells chimed dreamily from the convents up the banks, and directed our thoughts to friends and loves at home.

Next at Folkestone—queerest of sea-towns, doubled up with its head on its legs, like a shrimp—with my trusty and well-beloved brother. We ate six dozen—out of which I had four—and then we had some stewed for supper. I remember me of that dish at night. It was a dirty dizzly evening out of doors, with a long heady sea falling dismally against the lighthouse. As we looked from our hotel window we could see the steamer coming in from Boulogne—a mere triangle of stars dancing over the water. We could see the rain, too, coming down in torrents, and mark the sharp east wind carrying it into the faces of the well-mackintoshed, weather-beaten loiterers waiting for the packet. In our room the fire was crackling in the polished grate, and the oysters, lightly powdered with parsley, like the sea outside with green foam, were smoking on the table. What

a delicious meal it was! What a glorious bowl of punch, too, with thin curls of lemon-peel winding through it, like straws through amber, was that with which the feast was culminated. Whether the French steamer ever came in that night I do not know. We went to bed as elevated as princes, and had a fine breezy walk on the beach next morning to restore the tone of our leathery palates.

Then at quaint little Queenstown, set up so nicely on the sides of Ireland's green hills—standing out so clear yet so embrowned against the sea, that it looks like an old landscape by Claude or Gaspar Poussin. A ruddy Irish girl—with the sweetest dimple (the *brogue* of the Milesian features) in her cheek—serves me oysters here, and when I leave and give her heaps of *backsheesh* for herself, she puts her lips into a cherry, and—why I've had two conjunctions in this sentence already, and there I had better stop.

Next at the Antipodes, under a blazing sun, on the torrid shores of the South Pacific. And if you really wish to eat oysters at their best you must go to Sydney. They lie pimpling the "channelled visages of the antique rocks" all about the harbour of Port Jackson. With a chisel and hammer, a bottle of chili vinegar, and some bread and butter, a man may there enjoy the "natives" to his heart's content. They do eat so cool as you take them from the rocks, washing them in their shell in the little holes of water which glance and gleam in the "honeycombs" along the shore. You cut your hands a good deal, certainly, and the sea-water gets into the wounds and makes them exquisitely painful; but there are always inconveniences connected with pic-nics, and oyster pic-nics are no exception to the rule.

Lastly in London at a score of places. At Quinn's, after the opera; at Smith's, near Exeter Hall, after Gough, Spurgeon, the Lyceum, or the Adelphi; at Lynn's for luncheon; and Prosser's, at supper-time. Each of these establishments excels in its particular line. They are great at Quinn's in oysters stewed; celebrated at Lynn's for oysters plain; noted at Prosser's for oysters scalloped; and famous near Exeter Hall for oysters fried in brimstone—I beg pardon, I mean batter.

At all these places, then, have I eaten oysters; and at a good many more, I dare say, if I had the head to think of them. Ah! how many times, as I have been trudging home, years ago, through the early hours of the summer mornings, have I dropped into a late house and had my plate of oysters, and pint of double stout! How often, too, has Respectability (who has his liver-wing and half-pint of pale sherry awaiting him at home) passed by the open door, seen my head above the box, shrugged his shoulders, and passed on! Respectability, you know, doesn't believe in oysters eaten in public after ten.

But I see that while I have been building up this clumsy grôtto from the shells of Past, my present oysters have been waiting for me on the table. I leave the shells now, and take to the fish. Shall I not, *lector benevole*, get the wherewithal for the former to pay for the latter? I feel I shall, and so go to my oysters with much thankfulness and a tolerable appetite. They are splendid! I revive already!

XVI.

A MAY-DAY ODE.*

TIME was when my lord and my lady would come
 With the tootle of pipe and the banging of drum,
 When in ivies, and ribbons, and flowers was seen
 That Elf of the Chimney—the man in the green.
 Ah! well I remember the heart-stirring sound
 That in shovel and broom and brass-heels was found,
 The clown's hearty quips, the merry-go-round,
 Till the green, prone to beer, lay prone on the ground.
 The lady was always as grand as could be
 (We dubbed her the short of Chol-mon-de-*ley*),
 With cloth-of-gold kirtle that reached to the knee,
 And well-spangled garters—*honi soit qui!*
 And ladle in which your face you might see
 (And hers, in a sense) if you dropt oboli.
 What a flash little hat she flashly would wear,
 Perched just on one side—ay, quite debonair—
 That's a good word in fashion up at Mayfair—
 And held by the comb at the back of her hair.

* I intended to have written a paper on Jack-in-the-Green, and, accordingly, went into a district where, in my boyhood, May-day exhibitions were rife. There I wandered for nearly the whole of two days, without seeing a Jack-in-the-Green at all. Hence this jingle.

A broad stream of ribbon
 (My tongue may run glib on,
 But I'd not tell a fib on
 A subject like satin or sarsenet)
 Flowed down from the brim,
 In Amina-like trim—
 I mean when *he* sees her talking to *him*—
 To her bodice, where she would fast'n it.
 Her feet were incased in shoes rosy red,
 Like Mrs. Macbeth's when blood she has shed,
 And leaps with them "laced"-up into her bed.*
 They had buckles of steel,
 Were much down-at-heel,
 But twinkled quite astrally,
 Like P. Nina's from Castily,
 When they peeped 'neath her skirts in a reel.
 My lord was as gay in his own lordly way,
 With a terrible stick which kept boys at bay—
 A sort of Beau Bumble abroad on half-pay.
 His hat was of tissue turned up with tinfoil;
 His nose was of blue, with a decent-sized boil—
 Like a garnet in turquoise—set right at the end of it,
 And a very De Rothschild sinister bend in it.
 The clown was "a glory, a trophy, a pride,"
 Whose "hits" smashed your beaver, or else split
 your side,
 Whose cheeks were well-whitewashed picked out
 with red,
 Like the face of a maiden whose lover has fled;
 (Or that same maiden's cheek when on rump-steaks
 she's fed,
 And they lie on her chest as heavy as lead!)

* "—— laced with his golden blood."—MACBETH.

Or the trail in the snow of some wounded hart sped ;
 Or the stain on the white wall where ripe grapes
 have bled ;
 Or that Byronic "hue" on the brow of the dead ;
 Or the glow i' the clover by fierce poppies shed ;
 Or those wild berries gleaming round Lear's white
 head ;
 Or Agamemnon's warm blood on the bath's marble
 bed.

(All which, you see,
 Is hyperbole, &
 But none the worse to you and me ;
 Because
 In the laws
 Of comic verse, such
 Trifling flaws
 Don't reckon for much.)

And then the tribe of little sweepers,
 With their glist'ning teeth and ebon peepers,
 And jackets of tinsel and scarlet gingham,
 And shovels with bits of gilt stuck in 'em,
 Like gingerbread cakes that folks tuck in 'em ;
 Oh ! those jolly young sweeps must have had Puck
 in 'em !

They danced like Highlanders victorious,
 Showing most clearly the muscle *sartorius*
 Can be as well trained by the climbing of flues
 As taking of lessons in white satin shoes—
 A fact, by my soul ; but then what's the use
 To publish it here ?—Mayfair doesn't choose
 Turveydrop to give up for Broom of the mews.
 If shovel and kit could combine it might pay—
 Black Sal and Old Turvey—*Topsy*-Turvey, let's say !

* * * * *

Oh! a rare old thing was the ivy green,
With the golden marigolds shining between
The cool green leaves of the lacéd boughs
(With the hole in the centre that just allows
The head of poor "Jack" to take a sight),
Like (the words are old Marvell's) "stars in a
greene nighte."

How it used to rumble and tumble about,
While the bevy of sweepings made riot and rout,
And my lady tripped round with her ladle of brass
To levy a copper from all who might pass,
Looking as arch as any May Queen
King Alf. of the bards in fancy has seen.
And what did the Clown? Why, those who wouldn't
pay,
Close-fisted old rascals, with hearts dry as hay
(Such hearts get the drier 'neath Mirth's warmest
ray),

Went with him upon their proud shoulders away.
But after a time they would placidly stay,

Bargain with clown

To get down for a brown,

Then move off with curses on sweeps and Mayday.
Oh! those were the Maydays, dear reader, for me—
Such Maydays, alas! nevermore shall we see;
They have gone, I'm afraid, with all their gay hues,
To the tomb of the Capulets or *Montagues*!
(The pun's in Italics—forgive me, my Muse.)
For see, we've grown wise, and Knowledge has cast
The leaves of the green before the cold blast
Which from her lean cheeks she is puffing so free,
And thus has this Elegy fallen to me.

• XVII.

A CONTESTED ELECTION.

THERE is a time in every man's life when he comes before the public. Some take to amateur theatricals; some to local preaching; some to corresponding with the newspapers; and some to getting into Parliament. I know of one who managed to combine the first and the last modes together. He represented Greenwich and Gloster during the same session.

There was a time in my life when I was foolish enough to become a "candidate." As a General Election is at hand, I may be permitted, perhaps, to tell my experiences. Oh! fatal day—or rather night, for it was after supper and a stiffish glass of grog—when I answered that "requisition" in the affirmative and clapped it in the newspapers. It was a large constituency—it had a bishop, and a cathedral, and a university, and all the rest of it. The Premier of the day, too, had represented it for any number of years, and it was this First Minister I was about to oppose.

What a tremendous thing is a General Election! How the publicans rejoice in it! No sooner has the House dissolved than the smallest beer reaches the largest price—is *tripled* in cost—shall we say?—by

the *ex*-Ministers! What a General Election was in the rare days of rotten boroughs, I am not old enough to recollect. It must have been something remarkably fine, though. Why, I suppose a man with a vote could be drunk at the expense of the candidates all the time a contest continued. Of course he didn't care more than the value of a "straw" for either, and, consequently, was not troubled with prickings of conscience when fed and feed and fêted by the acting committees of both. O! happy time—O! prudish Bill of '32! What is the use of paying one's taxes—of having a goodly file of rent receipts—of keeping square with the sewers' and the water rates—when the vote that hangs thereto is no longer a commodity for the market?

Not that a General Election now is to be altogether despised. I paid the publicans a mint of money I know, and spent a little fortune, such as I am afraid I shall never again possess, on public dinners to myself and my principal committee-men. My opponent, the Minister, you see, was the shrewdest of individuals. The moment he appealed to the country, he sent a retainer to all the licensed victuallers in the constituency, and engaged every spare room for his committees. The consequence was I had to bid him out, and there wasn't a tavern-keeper in the place who didn't draw his fifty guineas of me at the close of the struggle. Some of the accounts rendered were remarkable. Attached to my corps of canvassers was a Welshman, and the publican at whose house he had put up, charged me for the month of the candidature, no less than three pounds, fifteen shillings, and sevenpence for leeks! The coffee-houses, too, cost me in-

credible sums. There was one place called the "Father Mathew," a famous resort for the Temperance folks of the city. For ginger-beer and sandwiches alone I paid at this establishment twenty-nine pounds ten. On analysing the account, I found that this gave one hundred and one bottles and a half of the effervescing beverage to every registered teetotaler in the place. (I should add that cholera appeared in the district shortly after the election, and that it was remarked by the local officers of health that the Temperance people vanished before the scourge as drops of water in the sun.) My printer's bill was still more enormous. This was to be partly accounted for in this way. After I was sound asleep at night, the Premier's committee used to send an army of bill-stickers through the city, and these, with wild shouts of exultation, would cover every poster of mine they fell across. To prevent this, I subsequently engaged a select party of fighting men to follow in the trail of the uproarious stickers and fall foul of any who defaced my bills. Wishing to make an early display of their zeal, the pugilists sallied forth early the next morning, and fell upon an old local bill-sticker—employed chiefly by the Little Bethels in the neighbourhood to post the important announcements for the forthcoming Sabbaths—and nearly slew him. This, trivial as it may seem—for the old fellow, after all, only had the bridge of his nose broken, and one of his eyes permanently obscured—lost me the election. The hiring of the pugilists leaked out, and the religious world turned against me to a man. Further, long after the election was over, and I had forgotten all about it, I had to sustain an action for assault and

battery (the battery, I imagine, referred to the fact that my band of zealots made the venerable Samuel Slick eat his own paste!), and was muloted in fifty pounds damages, and the fullest possible costs. Well, when I discovered the fighting men were thus useless and impracticable, I discharged them—almost with as much difficulty, by the way, as Toots discharged the “Chicken”—and went into printer’s ink with the recklessness of a Barnum. I issued caricatures after the style—and a long way after, certainly—of the weekly cartoons in *Punch*. Every morning a fresh picture was plastered over the walls of the city. I engaged a poet, and pelted my opponent with squibs and ballads. A new song was composed every two or three hours, and bands of minstrels used to parade the thoroughfares and chant the latest ditty at the top of their brazen voices. In this way I kept my printer tolerably busy. At the end of the contest, however, I found myself indebted to him to the extent of something like 450*l.*, or nearly five shillings a-head for every man who had recorded his vote in my favour. I need scarcely add that I had never—despite my squibs and caricatures—had 450*l.* or half 450*l.* worth of bills. The printer was a friend, and fleeced me accordingly.

The advertising was another appalling item in my expenditure. There were several papers in the constituency, and, of course, out of the number, two or three were violently opposed to me. These I strove to appease with long advertisements, and, in several instances, the plan succeeded. The outlay, however, was awful. One of the journals that I knew used absolutely to pay to get an advertisement (that is

supposing it was at liberty to keep it in its columns as long as it pleased, so as thereby to reduce the typographical expenses of the establishment). charged me half-a-crown a line for every address of mine which it inserted. Touching these newspapers, there was another journal—it was kept up by the friends of the Minister, and was not to be bribed by advertisements—which daily denounced me in the most unmistakeable manner. It found out that my great-grandmother on the father's side had died somewhere in Virginia, and I was held up to the constituency as the descendant of a negro woman by a dealer in slaves. I was called "Uncle Tom" (Mrs. Stowe's book was just out), and troops of niggers were sent round the town to sing the woes of their race and lay them all at my grandmother's door. Of course the boys of the place, not knowing precisely what "Uncle Tom" meant, invented a name of their own; and every *gamin* I passed in the street shouted after me "Bones" at the very top of his voice. The Minister's committee, borrowing my notion of the caricatures, stuck me on the wall, with a banjo in my hand, burnt cork on my countenance, and the crispest crop of wool on my head. Under all these afflictions I was nearly driven out of my mind; and when at length the local rag-merchant had a new doll made for his shop-door and christened it, in large Roman capitals, "Grandmother ——," I had serious thoughts of retiring from the battle as speedily as possible.

My committee wouldn't have it. They were determined, come what might, that I should go to the poll. They managed, after much delicate negotiation, to send the serenaders away from the district, and

—by an exquisite piece of diplomacy—to quiet the boys. This last was effected in manner following. That is to say : whenever I showed myself in public one of my committee went with me, and the moment a boy called me “Bones,” my companion stopped, gave him some money, and entered into a contract with him on the spot—which contract was held to apply to his companions—to call me “Bones” whenever he saw me, on condition of receiving a like amount. This answered admirably ; for by subsequently refusing to pay the stipulated sum when the boy and his comrades had shouted after me with the utmost enthusiasm, the young urchins suddenly “struck,” and I suffered no more from their annoyance.

Other preliminaries equally important having been arranged, I determined to go to the poll. As the time of election drew near, I thought the consequences which sprang from this decision would overwhelm me. If I had one letter in a day from conscientious old fogies propounding difficult questions in political economy, and requiring my immediate answer, I had a hundred. For a time I endeavoured to gather from the communications the reply with which each writer would be most pleased ; but somehow or other, the local papers published some of the correspondence, and my opinions were found to clash in a manner highly fatal to my character for consistency. I found the women a great plague during the latter days of the struggle. One day a deputation of three waited upon me to request my notions concerning the Rights of Women and the Duties imposed upon Tea. The answer I gave—

which was that the duties imposed upon women were the rites of tea—seemed to give them entire satisfaction. I remember, by the way, that later that same day another lady—afflicted with a drunken husband, the proprietor of the aforesaid “Father Mathew”—called on me at my hotel to know my sentiments on Total Abstinence. I plied her well with some capital pale sherry, and totally abstained from answering her question. What else could I have done? My principal supporter was a brewer, and the chairman of my committee an evangelist. It was only by the most judicious conduct that I could ever have hoped to gain a seat.

My hopes told for nothing. I might just as well have spoken out honestly as a pint-bottle man, and let fortune take its chance. The nomination day came. I never slept a wink the preceding night. I heard the workmen erecting the hustings as I lay turning and tumbling on my pillow, and thought of Carlyle’s splendid passage in the *Sartor Resartus* beginning “Comes a noise from the Rabenstein.” Awful conceit for a candidate, this connexion of the gallows and the hustings!

And daylight came at last, and I drank my coffee and tried to eat my egg. It was no use. A heavy yoke was on me, and I had not sufficient power to crack the shell. The egg and toast remained untasted when my committee came to bear me to the hustings. I felt like a lamb being led to the shambles, and thought what a mockery it was for the band outside to hail me on their clarions as the “Conquering Hero.” I scarcely remember anything further of what took place. The Minister made a

speech—so did I. I think mine was best, but am not quite sure. This I know, neither was very good.

Wild words wandered here and there

as we were speaking—my friends putting in ugly parentheses during the Minister's discourse, and the Minister's friends doing ditto during the progress of mine. I am not quite clear at this date—in fact, I never was—whether I was loudly cheered or loudly groaned while I was talking. I know there were great hubbub and much fighting. I know I called the Minister a traitor to his country, and hinted at impeachment; but why I did so I am totally unable to tell. After the nomination I gave a public dinner to myself and chief supporters, and, at the close of the banquet, delivered the harangue I had prepared for the hustings, but which I had forgotten when it came to my turn to speak. What cries of "Bravo!" "Bravo!" "Bravis-si-mo!"—what rattling of goblets—greeted the oration. I went to bed full of rosy hope and rosier champagne. I was up next morning with the lark. The Minister, however, like the little pig in the nursery rhyme, had been up before me. My polling-clerks were bought off; some of my principal supporters had been suddenly called away from the district: the game, in fact, was over. I fought desperately during the day, but it was of no avail. At four o'clock, the Minister had polled his two thousand votes, I only eighteen hundred. Each vote, I found, on going over the accounts, had cost me seventeen shillings, a halfpenny, and some incalculable fraction. Moreover, from the polling-day until now, I have never been free from a toothache

contracted while speaking to the populace in the open air. If any constituency, therefore, should think of getting me to become a candidate in this forthcoming election, that constituency—I say it respectfully—was never more mistaken in its life.

XVIII.

THE BOARD OF WORKS.

OUR Municipal Institutions are the safety-valves of the constitution—a well-sounding sentence, I take it, which the editor of the *Times* is at liberty to transfer, if it please him, to his leading columns. Look at our friend Horatio Verbage, the democrat. Do you think that man wouldn't be always getting up a revolution if we hadn't fixed him in the Common Council? There is Rotter, too, the violent economist. The way that little man used to conduct himself at Lambeth elections was awful to behold. He cross-examined candidates like an Old Bailey lawyer. His green coat was a more terrible thing in the eyes of his opponents than the glittering plume of Max Piccolomini, or the "burnished arms" of the hero so eloquently referred to by Mr. Gladstone on Tuesday night. He became a rock of stumbling and a stone of offence to every one who dared to contest the borough. Nothing could shake him, nothing could soften him. The keenest shafts fell blunted from his pachydermatous hide. A local paper showed him up; but then he bought the whole impression and distributed the copies among his friends. All this was sad, but it wasn't saddest. His politics were bad enough, but in an evil moment

he went to hear Mr. Spurgeon, and henceforth Calvin and Cobden moved hand-in-hand with him together. For the future, candidates were examined in their creeds terrestrial and celestial. "If we return you," Rotter would say, "are we to understand you are in favour of the ballot?" "With all my heart." "And pure election?" "Why, of course, one depends on the other." "Sir!" Rotter would exclaim, "religion is above a joke—I shall give my vote to the other candidate."

Of course, this couldn't last for ever. A vacancy occurred in the representation, and a gentleman was put forward in the popular interest. A likely candidate enough, too. He was sound in everything but the eternity of punishment. Had he known Rotter long enough he'd have been sound upon that. As it was, however, Rotter's opposition was certain. What was to be done? A meeting of the chief supporters of the candidate was called; the matter was seriously discussed, and all sorts of suggestions were offered. Still there seemed no practical way of coping with the difficulty. The meeting was just breaking up, thoroughly out of spirits, when the candidate himself suggested that Rotter should be nominated for a "guardianship" which had fallen vacant in the parish in which he had his place of business. The notion was a happy one, and immediately acted upon. Rotter was made a guardian, and, from that time to this, has devoted his genius to parochial matters. Of course, he is still an objector; but then, his objections being chiefly confined to the quality of workhouse soup, are no longer the terror of the Lambeth constituency.

Thus, then, works, in healthiest manner, our Anti-

Centralization system. Thus do I see a use in the Board of Works and all other places that draw off the parochial mind from imperial interests. I can go down to Guildhall on Friday afternoons and hear the hon. member for Muckincreek without ever once being called to order for laughing. If I do smile now and then in the course of the proceedings, it is at something so thoroughly irresistible that I'd defy Mr. Spooner himself—or even that solemn Mr. Newdegate—to keep from roaring outright.

Last Friday—for instance—I laughed a good deal. It was the middle of a debate when I arrived, and four men were speaking at once. The Chairman passed his hand over his bald forehead, called "Order," smiled weakly, fell back in his chair, and allowed the four to continue without further interruption. The leader of the quartette was a short, little man, with a very white head and very black whiskers. I stopped in the Hall three hours, and during the whole of that period—with, perhaps, an occasional intermission of a few seconds—the hon. member was talking. Nothing seemed to come amiss to him. He was eloquent upon Main Drainage, trippingly graceful on leaden pipes, and profoundly artistic on the painting of street corners. In one sense he is the most rising man in the chamber, and the name of Lathe will very likely go down to posterity on the entablature of a lamp-post.

Seated just below him was Mr. Piper, late candidate for Snargate. Piper, too, has very large gifts of volubility—but then he has the good sense never to rise until a question is disposed of, so that he manages, without delaying the business, to bridge over the gulfs between the various motions on the

paper, and always resumes his seat the moment the Chairman tells him to sit down. It is very funny to watch Piper when other members are speaking. He is smothered all over with jewellery, and, while a debate is in progress, loves to play with the half-a-dozen rings or so he has upon his fingers. Having used up the rings, he twiddles his watch-chain, and then, growing weary of this, moves up to his shirt-pin. All being exhausted, he thrusts his hands to the bottoms of his pockets and plays with his money, until, the business being disposed of, he rises, as I say, to offer a word or two concerning it.

One member of the board is not to be abashed by Piper's jewels. Nixon has faith in a large gold pencil-case, and flashes its blood-stone top in Piper's face with a kind of *homo-sum-humani-nihil* haughtiness and scorn. Goodman, who sits next to him, is a merry, restless, twinkling man in glasses, and he greatly annoys Nixon by pushing against his elbow all the time he is taking notes. Nixon would move, but then, unhappily, Piper on the opposite seat would not move with him. He might just as well shut up his pencil-case as change his place, and when a man has a gold Mordan as large as a good-sized telescope, of course he doesn't like to hide it under a bushel.

There is a man, though, who is always changing his seat. Mr. Grizzly, in his tight-buttoned coat and reddish-grey stubbly hair, moves about from "post" to "pillar" just like the subjects on the notice-paper. If there be one spot in the room more sacred to him than another, it is a seat on the right hand side of the table. Here he will come for a few minutes—enter upon an abstruse numerical calcula-

tion on a sheet of foolscap—and then move off to some other place. What Mr. Grizzly's calculations all come to, I am not in a position to say; but that they are of a most portentous character in themselves, no one who has ever glanced over that page of foolscap can possibly deny. On Friday last, for instance, I saw him deep in a long division sum, with 99,999 for the divisor. Whether these were pounds or pantiles, it is impossible for me to tell. Judging from the serious manner, however, in which the arithmetician knitted his brows and pursed his lip while he was pursuing his calculations, I am rather inclined to think that they must have been the former.

So far as I can see, Mr. Grizzly is one of the chief men of the Board. And I can easily understand this. He goes to the very roots of things, and deals with drainage on essential grounds. He was very great last Friday against the doctrine of expediency being adopted in the naming of our streets. "Upper Avenue-road," he exclaimed, "must not be disposed of in this manner—Lupper Lavenue Load," he contended, becoming mispronounceable as he grew enthusiastic, "must not be sacrificed to mere expediency. There must be some clear principle laid down in this matter. What becomes of the Lower-road—I might say, in fact, of the very middle road—if there isn't?" The point of this was not very apparent. Its indefiniteness, however, was admirably atoned for in the illustration with which it was accompanied. "Suppose you were a gentleman, Mr. Chairman,"—says Mr. Grizzly, adding, after an awkward pause, "living somewhere in London, and you sent your servant to the Upper Avenue-road, and he

couldn't find it out, wouldn't you, sir, call him a stupid ass when he returned?" Mr. Grizzly's notion of a gentleman, it would seem from this, is essentially original, and I was not at all surprised, therefore, to find it received with cheers by the other members of the Board. Mr. Squire, a red-faced portly man with huge frills, and Alderman Buzby a heavy-looking gentleman with large white towel coiled around his neck, no shirt collar, and a bald crown, laughed consumedly. There is a very slim, straight man—like a young poplar—in new green kid gloves, and shiny pointed boots, who is alone displeased with the vigour of Mr. Grizzly's diction, and he shrugs his shoulders and elevates his eyebrows, like Hogarth's French waiter, and ultimately, with disgust seated upon his forehead, quits the place. The Rev. Mr. Becket, too, disapproves of such language, and calls out, "Oh! oh!" in unctuous accents. Mr. Becket is a very short man with a very round head, and a chin stippled with very light blue, as if gunpowder had been rubbed in at the roots of his beard.

But it was not with the members of the Board I had purposed to deal. I had intended to pass all these over—including even the great Mr. Dipfinger, with his dark hair and gloomy countenance—and to say a word or two on the social ethics of the chamber. I wished to ask why, considering the Board is chiefly made up of men who have been all their lives ridiculing the House of Commons, and holding themselves up as the sort of individuals who ought to be sent to Parliament, so little capability for managing their own affairs has been hitherto displayed? Why, when a discussion turns on nothing

larger than whether the name of a street shall be painted in white on a black plate, or in black on a white one, or whether a tradesman in Oxford-street shall be allowed to hang a bird-cage out of his top-floor window, should every member wish to speak at once, and the Chairman and his authority be held in utterest contempt? Why should members talk themselves dry on a parish-pump, and rise into rhapsody on a plug? Why make balconies a party question, and fight like so many monks about cowls? Why should Mr. Grizzly get heated upon chimney-pots, and Mr. Lathe grow heavily satirical on iron railing? Do they not feel that as a Board of Works they are expected to do as much, and say as little as need be? Surely they can spend the people's money without making speeches as long as Mr. Gladstone's, and as tiresome as Mr. Cox's.

There is certainly one thing they do without much talking. As the clock strikes two they adjourn, and go quietly to lunch. The majority send out the messenger for their refreshments, and it is rare fun, on the re-assembling of the Board, to see this functionary going round to collect his accounts. Sometimes a member, after disposing of his lunch, hurriedly departs without paying, and then the messenger grows grim in the extreme. Generally the members have good appetites. I picked up a bit of paper on Friday, which had been passed to Gany-mede just before the adjournment, containing the following order:—"½ lb. am, pint of port Whine, Penny loaf, bit of cheese, and a black-led pensel." Some few of the Board drop out and get their luncheons at the neighbouring houses. Now and then you may observe them enjoying their glass of

porter at the bar of the tavern at the corner, and once I saw a distinguished member go round the first turning on the left, take his hard-boiled egg from his pocket, a crust of bread from his hat, and his drink of water from the ladle of the pump. That's a patriot if you like.

XIX.

OUR SHIP.

OF course cur ship is the finest and fastest afloat. Everybody's ship is, and ours—leaving out the screw and the moonrakers—beats them all hollow. The captain swears *by* her as vigorously as he swears *on* her, and, so far as I have seen, the skipper has a very proper estimate of the craft. I was speaking to a sailor yesterday who saw us come into the Mersey, and, says he, punctuating his speech with many quid-dities, "I've seen a few vessels on and off, master, but —— my eyes, if it wouldn't take the Royster-ing Charley longer to stop still than it would to beat the lot!" To which opinion I say, Ay! ay!

Why look at us when we are off the "Cape." I don't mean the Cape of Good Hope—that is all very well in its way—but it's Cape Horn from which I am taking my bearings at present, and that is to the Cape of Good Hope what African sherry is to the old South American "fire-water." Why, when we were off the Horn our ship struck an iceberg, and stove in a plate or two of her bows. Some—including myself—thought she was going to the bottom; but we were never more mistaken in our lives. It was a lovely night—rare enough in latitude 66 S.—and the moon was just putting a silver tip on the end of the jibboom, and whitening the bellies

of the sails, when we first saw the berg. The moon was at the full, in fact, and the light, falling beneath a thin line of mackerel clouds, made the ice gleam and glisten like so much crystal. It came drifting towards us, we making, by the line, seven and a half against the faintest puff of east wind and a somewhat heavy sea. First it was like a castle, and I could see the battlements and drawbridges, and the great stone keep, and the solitary sentries sleeping on the top. Then it was like an old cathedral, and the moonbeams fell green upon the edges—heaped with snow, like so much moss—and showed the row of mouldering cloisters in the distance. Then it was like a ruined city, and I could almost fancy I saw the petrified inhabitants standing in monumental gloom amid the broken columns and heaped-up plinths and friezes. I had made out all this—and a good deal more which I cannot recollect—when I heard the captain shout “Hard-a-port!” The man at the wheel let go his hold, to allow the tiller full play. The wheel flew round like lightning, one of the pins struck the poor fellow in the chest and threw him upon the deck, and the next instant I heard the bows of the vessel scrape, with a peculiar cracking, tooth-drawing sound, against the edge of the berg, and found myself flat upon my face. It was the first-mate’s watch, and the second mate was standing, with a knot of ladies, admiring the great floating mass of ice, when the quartermaster was thrown upon the deck. In a moment—he was always as brave as a lion—second mate was at the wheel. The ladies gave a shriek while the men carried the quartermaster—he was quite dead—a little for’ard. We looked at one

another, but no one spoke. We saw the berg sailing by, and that gave us some hope. The ship, too, we all knew, was built with water-tight compartments, and this also was in our favour. No one ventured for'ard but the sailors. The steam was blowing off with a shriek, and the captain was standing on the bridge over the engine-house. The first mate—who had been for'ard with the men—came to him in a moment. A few words passed between them, and then the captain walked on to the poop. Some of the women began gathering round him, and their faces looked as white—as white, perhaps, as mine, if I could only have seen it. I shall never forget the skipper. Taking his cigar-case from his pocket, he struck a fusee on the taffrail, and proceeded, with all the quietness in the world, to light a cheroot. I thought the light which glowed in the cheeks and eyes of the women was the reflection of the cigar—and so it was in one sense, for the evident calmness of the captain's manner had reassured them more than all the talking in the world. "There's nothing to fear!" said he, at last; "a couple of plates are stove in above water-mark, and, although the sea is dashing in, the thing'll soon be put to rights."

And so it was. We all went down to the cuddy with the captain (who in the meantime, after quieting the passengers, had been forward and set the men to work), and had some sherry and sandwiches, and before we had finished the repast, the mate came in and reported that the water had been pumped out, the orifices stopped from within, and ship steaming West and by North, sir, five knots and a half full.

That is only one of a score of little mishaps that

Our Ship has overcome; but I leave the full recital of these for another and more fitting time. I am now writing as a Lounger in London, and sea-yarns would be somewhat out of character. I only make mention of the ship at all, because I saw her in dry-dock a day or two ago, and thought I owed a good turn to a vessel that brought me safely the other day over sixteen thousand miles of water.

Our Ship looks best, I think, at night. She's by no means unworthy of being sketched in the morning when a few albatrosses are sailing round her, and a whale blowing his foamy fountain just a length or two behind. She's pretty at sunset again, when her sails flush purple, and the passengers form themselves into so many little knots, and, as the twilight thickens, watch the roseate touches dying in the West. She's brave in a storm at any time. Why that ship rides a gale better than I ride an ass on Blackheath. She shakes off a sea as a restive horse throws its rider. But, she's best of all o' nights, when the dancing is going on aft, the sailors are singing "Chiliman" round the galley, and any number of proposals are being made among the "intermediates" behind the long-boat. How beautifully, at the stilly hour of eight bells, she moves through the water, and flings the phosphorescent foam about her like an Eastern queen beneath a rain of pearls. What was Cleopatra's barge in comparison, or any "Nicean barque" that ever sailed upon a "perfumed sea?"

But the best part of Our Ship, either by day or night, isn't on deck at all. There is a snug little cockpit forward, before the jollity of which mere cuddy luxuries count as nothing. The second and third mates (first mate is always a snob), one or

two young middies, a guitar, plenty of grog and smoke, a good old cheese, and some biscuits, will make as jolly an evening among them as any Christian need wish to spend. On Our Ship these parties are nightly occurrences. There is a young midshipman on board with lots of money. He is always inviting his friends to meet him. He is a pleasant youth, with large bland eyes, and a superfluous number of oaths. I never knew a lad, though, who imprecated more innocently. He evidently thinks that good swearing and good seamanship go together. He swears at a little child on board all the time he is filling its lap with candy and comfits. He is, withal, a good-tempered youth, but constantly getting into scrapes with the first officer. The fact is, middy's father is a clergyman down in the neighbourhood where the first officer's mother is a laundress and clear-starcher. After the breaking up of these festivities—which doesn't generally happen until an advanced hour, when not even the ghost of a *dead-light* remains—it sometimes happens that you find it difficult to discover your right "home" amongst the long line of cabins down the side of the dimly-lighted saloon. This kind of thing, though, is by no means confined to festivities at sea. In fact there is an advantage connected with these marine revels over similar meetings on land: as you stumble along from cockpit to cuddy, no one, on the mere strength of the stumbling, can report you as drunk. "How she rolled last night," says old Major Chutney, as he helps himself to an anchovy at breakfast next morning; "I could scarcely walk along the saloon." "Don't make a mistake in the number of the cabin next time, Major," says young

O'Possum from Australia; "I found you damning my door at about three o'clock because, according to your account, somebody had removed the handle."

There is pleasant work on the Roystering Charley in the evening. A select whist party takes one table, chess, draughts, and backgammon occupy another, and a jovial circle of "speculators" a third. At nine o'clock the hot water is served, when each brews his glass of toddy—baling out a wine-glass of the smoking liquor for his lady neighbour—and jollity holds sway for the remainder of the evening. Those who don't understand Hoyle—who are dummies at whist, dull at dominoes, and regularly thrown on their backs with regard to all-fours—who think draughts dry, and see no point in backgammon—generally retire to the poop after tea, to get up their little music and dancing parties, and warble and waltz gaily enough 'neath the light of the glistening stars.

In dirty weather Our Ship is not to be altogether slighted. She rolls a good deal, I admit, but show me the vessel that doesn't. There is a polarity, too, as Mr. Emerson would say, about this rolling. See how it churns the preserved milk (there is a cow attached to Our Ship, but I think she is only a kind of stage property, for, certes, her *via lactea* is as dry as leather), and makes a rich syllabub of the port wine. What an excuse it affords, too, for bad carving at dinner, and for becoming a sort of "shore" to the pretty young lady who sits next to you. If the lurches do empty the soup-plates occasionally in your lap, and chip the edges of the crockery until the plates look like circular saws—if they do throw you

out of your bunk at night, and land your head in the water-jug—what of that? Of course, no harm can ever come to the Roystering Charley, and, comforted by this conviction, all you have to do is to put up with the little annoyances for the sake of the “amenities” which, as I have shown, lurk beneath them.

For there are some very nice girls—and with this I must conclude—journeying upon *Our Ship*. I like to see them in the cold mornings furred up to their pretty little noses, peeping up the companion-ladders to see if the weather will admit of a walk before breakfast. I like to see them at “church” on Sundays, gathered round a pork barrel “rigged” as a pulpit, with an old Union Jack rolled up for the cushion, and hear them lifting up their voices in solemn praise across the solemn sea. It is a grand sight this last. Full service in a cathedral is nothing to it. Jack in his clean shirt, and with that same Bible in his hand which his mother gave him years ago, when his face, now hardened with brine and scarred with sleet, was the pride of the old woman’s heart, is as impressive a figure to me as the finest-clad young neophyte who ever swung a censer. I know Jack sings out of tune, and ultimately swamps the *Old Hundredth* in the Bay of Biscay. But what matters that? Despite defects in harmony, the song of praise goes aloft in all its purity.

I must have one word more about the company in *Our Ship*. It is always a “merrie” one. There is Uncle Jack coming home from Bushland with Mr. Micawber and Mrs. Micawber (baby in arms, as usual); Emily, somewhat pale, and in mourning for old Peg-gotty; Young Jericho, with his wife and little ones;

a jaded-looking man, who has evidently led a hard life somewhere, but who, by his jollity now, shows it is never too late to mend ; sleek Mr. Honeyman, and portly Mrs. Major M'Dowb, whom we took up at Suez ; and a host of others, whom it is pleasant to identify with the old familiar faces that have passed us in our reading.

XX.

IN MEMORIAM.

LIKE the last peach drying on the wall, the age seems, to me, to be daily losing its mellowness and bloom. Dr. Cumming is evidently right. The world is in the sere and fallow leaf, and the Millennium must come next. Look at Society from top to bottom—by which I mean from my Lord Lebanon to my Lord Lebanon's laundress—and see how everything has altered within the last dozen years. Hasn't all the colour been washed out of the age, as from a piece of bad Manchester print? Haven't all the jovial whist-clubs, that used to meet in those snug panelled parlours in the City, gone to Tophet? Haven't kiss-in-the-ring and hunt-the-slipper fled with the whist-clubs? Nay—I just asked the devil, who is waiting for this copy if he ever played at Chevy-Chase, and his answer was, "No; *but I've read it.*"

I've read it! That's just it, you see. Those three words open a shaft right down into the secret. The printer's devil is reading the *Percy Reliques* when he ought to be funking the cobbler. National System, Social Science, Wilderspin, are hourly ruining us—not only disposing of our kidneys, but, in Sansloviccan phrase "eating into our liver." We

have no fun left. The very clown in the pantomime no longer delights in making an ass of himself. Our children patronize barbers' poles instead of May-poles; our sons are "going in" for an examination; and our daughters prattle of Leyden jars, pointed architecture, and monumental brasses.

Monumental brasses. Ay, there's the rub. Not only have we grown sober—we have become "serious." We have left off purple and put on drab. We have turned our calumets into crosses, and our cairngorms into rosaries. Now, of course it will be said, I am sneering at Religion, overturning Revelation, and all the rest of it. I'm doing nothing of the kind. I am simply laughing at the latest Fashion. That fashion is a dull one. Otherwise—to return to those brasses aforesaid—why take rubbings of the hatchments of the Past, rather than of the signboards? Sneering at religion! Why what fine, jolly, genial souls our Christian forefathers were. They drank well, prayed better, and died best. Their pastors didn't go about with lengthened faces, scowling at mirth wherever they met it, but would turn out in their canonicals and play at football and hockey with the rudest of their flock. Look at their very cherubs—rosy and fat, as though they were the spirits of just aldermen departed. I love the fine old fellows, their memories gleaming up at us through a century, like rare red wine blushing through the dust and cobwebs that cling around the bottle.

This remark about hockey and football recalls to mind the subject of this retrospect. Where have departed our games? Who plays at hockey in 1859? I see some women in My Neighbour-

hood occasionally who carry strings of coloured bladders on a stick, and I thought at first these were intended for football. I have lately found out my mistake. They are constructed for balloons, in order that the youngsters may study aerostatics! The realm of fancy has become a waste. Our gingerbread is sold without gilt—everything, in fact, is served up plain except our pepper, and that is coloured with red-lead! A notable age, as Mr. Carlyle would put it.

Let me run over a few things to prove the truth of this prolusion. When I was a boy, an old man used to come into our neighbourhood with a ladder of a dozen spokes. He called himself a Professor, and was wont to balance this ladder on his chin, and would, if I wished it, put me at the top of it. I never see the professor now, and when I asked the aforesaid devil if *he* was ever so exalted, he grinned consumedly as if the mere mention of a ladder proved that something must be wrong in my upper story.

I remember me of a little street of tall, old houses, with red bricks above the windows, and quaint carven ledges overhanging the doors; and, in fancy, I see the sun throwing its beams upon the quiet roadway. In the centre of these beams,—like a golden mote—stands a pretty little girl. She has a wealth of yellow curls about her shoulders, and dingy white satin slippers, somewhat down at heel, upon her tiny feet. She is dancing on a square bit of plank about the size of a baker's bread-board, and is gleaming over with spangles like Queen Titania. A grubby old man, with a scarlet nose, is standing on the pavement, playing

the pipes and banging the drum, and a venerable dog, of professional aspect, is standing at his side growling "sweet and low" at lovely Preciosa as she beats her little brass-shod heels upon the sounding bit of board. How I loved Preciosa! Once a week she came to our street and took my store of halfpence. Nay, more. She took my hardbake, my Buona-parte's ribs, my bull's-eyes, my marsh-mallow rock. She took my heart as well, as I have said. I followed her about like her dog (which I think used to do a bit in the fortune-telling line at the public-houses in the evening), and once I bravely asked her father to take me as a "player." I shall never forget his answer. "Young gent," says he, brushing a tear, or a fly, from the tip of his nose with the end of his drum-stick, "you flatter me; but, you see, I'm not my own master. Buskin's my bos. It's a declining trade—don't join it. Busk. has me, and the girl, and the bitch—finding our own pipes and drum—for ten-and-six and our prog. I know the time when the dog was worth more. If you really want to be in the profession, as you say, take to the dagger-catching; there's nothing like it, since Lumpy Tommy stabbed himself by accident, and was carried off in his gore."

As time rolled on, of course I forgot Preciosa. I should like to know, however, if I wished at this date to take to the dagger business, to whom should I apply for preliminary lessons? When I was a boy there was a man—not Lumpy Tommy, *he* was a bit of a bungler—who used to combine dagger-throwing and ball-catching, and reaped a handsome revenue out of this amalgamated business. He went about with a sort of leathern dicebox perma-

nently fixed on his forehead, and would catch in this a ball thrown up a couple of hundred feet, as dextrously as the cook catches the tossed-up pancake. I remember I used to wonder, as a child, if this man ever had the headache, and what he would do for a living if a pimple should suddenly appear upon his brow. Certainly he had the dagger-throwing as a stand-by, but the cup-and-ball business was, in my opinion, his chief attraction. But where is either cup or dagger now? He dropped them both, like young Orsini in the opera, and took to the singing of Bacchanalian ditties.

And why? Because, so far as regards one half of his accomplishments, the age had grown too wise for him, and understood the laws of gravitation so profoundly, that the charm of catching the ball was entirely lost. Touching the other half, the daggers ceased to draw—lost all point, in fact—in consequence of the competition of foreign markets. You remember, reader, as well as I do, the appearance of those Celestials at Drury-lane? You know how they threw the daggers and pinned the little man with the moon-like face and comet-like pigtail to the board? Well, of course, after that our friend found the daggers flat, and took to the Little Warbler as aforesaid.

It may be urged that the ball and daggers are still occasionally seen. They are. I myself saw an impostor with them down a back street in the Strand the other day. He knew no more how to use them, however, than I know how to handle chopsticks. He never threw the ball higher than twenty feet, and then he couldn't catch it once out of a dozen

times ; and as for the daggers, why they were about as sharp as Hamlet's fencing-foil.

If *he* is to be considered a conjuror, then the miserable watchbox, in its green-baize petticoat, that shows itself sometimes in front of my window, is a genuine Punch-and-Judy. Twelve years ago, I knew seven of these exhibitions, and six of them had dogs. Five of the dogs, too, wore frills. Two of the frills were double. Where are they all now ? Is this *caput mortuum* outside my casement all that remains ? Why, sooner than carry such a thing as that—it has no Toby, no parson, no gallows—along the public streets, I'd turn railway director, or some other useful impostor, at once.

Think, too, of the larger shows that used to jog about when you, reader, were a boy—shows, I mean, with real live children with three heads, and sheep with a good double jointure of legs. I was personally acquainted, at the time of my passion for Preciosa, with two pink-eyed Circassians, a boa-constrictor, a long-bearded lady, a human quartz-crusher, who could split paving stones with his knuckles, a man who wrote poetry of proper feet with his toes, a fire-eater, a baby with a head weighing fifty pounds, a savage from the Zambesi, an alligator from the Nile, a sea serpent, and a dwarf with three rows of upper teeth. I met the alligator at Greenwich last year, round his owner's body as usual, but he looked a good deal older, and was evidently fast breaking up. The Zambesi savage, too, has appeared once or twice in public since Livingstone made his speeches ; but where all the others have gone, I am at a loss to tell. This much is clear, that the spirit of the age

is against them. The moment I saw a telescope set up on Waterloo-bridge for the cheap and rapid study of astronomy, I knew the alligator, who resided hard-by with the bearded lady, was doomed: the Great Bear settled his hash. Penny science came in, and penny shows went out.

Many other things went out with them. What has become of those shadowy exhibitions, where the bridge was broken and must be mended behind a sheet (not of water), where the cobbler burnt the shoes, and where Apis disported himself so ridiculously to the terror of the old dame who had been to fetch them? I see one occasionally at the corner of Wellington-street; but a few years ago there were at least three attached to every populous parish. Where, too, have the majority of the street tumblers gone? Where all the men who discoursed eloquent music upon glasses and bells? Where the Jacks-in-the-Green in the merry month of May? Where the artist in chalk who drew such splendid mackerel on the pavement? Where the Argonautic merchant who, not having as much money as he could tell, had yet golden-fleeced young lambs to sell at the low price of one halfpenny? They have all departed, and in their places we have penny microscopes and egg-incubation by steam! The last fact overwhelms me. I can write no more.

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XXI.

THE GLEE-CLUB SUPPER.

NOT far from my house there is an old-fashioned hostelrie where one or two of the leading men of the parish occasionally meet to practise glees. For the most part, they are very old men, and have been practising glees any time these forty years. The very name of Phillis (about whom all glees, so far as I have heard, seem to have been written) has died out since they first commenced to do her vocal honour. Fine old fellows, with gold spectacles, hair like silver lute-strings, and half-cracked voices, some of them are! They took to this glee business as boys when they were shrill trebles—they are now shaky tenors, gruff basses, and husky baritones. Not that they know it. Nature is very kind; and there isn't one of them but thinks he pipes as sweetly now as he did when George III. was king, and Incledon prime minister of melody.

Occasionally, however, I think a notion creeps over them that, in the course of time, their voices are likely to break. I overheard the President—a sparse-haired old bachelor of some eight-and-sixty summers—talking the other day about his middle notes having lost some of their *timbre*; and the Honorary

Secretary—who wears knee-breeches, buckled-shoes, and is over seventy—has taken to pulmonic lozenges, which, to say the least, doesn't look well. Moreover—and this is the most significant fact of all—the old fellows, whose exclusiveness, when I was a boy, was the scandal of the neighbourhood, have lately invited some of us young ones to join them, and, as an inducement, have added stewed kidneys to the bowl of hot punch which, from time immemorial, has figured at their weekly gatherings.

The hostelrie where they meet is called the Shepherd-and-Pipe. Originally, it was known only as the Shepherd; but when the Glee Club was established the musical part of the sign was added, and the shepherd invested with a pipe in compliment to the society.

It was a great night at the S.-and-P. last Monday. The forty-second anniversary of the Glee Club had come round; a supper was given by the host to celebrate the event; and I was honoured with an invitation to the banquet.

I went. Nor was it lost time. In fact, I found the whole party so genial—so hilarious and harmonious—that I resolved to sketch the feast for the benefit of those who were not fortunate enough to be present.

Pretty and pleasant looked the table, with its vases of flowers, its old-fashioned glasses, its affluence of quaint-looking spoons and saltcellars, and its little straw mats for the dishes to stand upon. And here, before the soup is brought in, let me give every one to understand that the Shepherd-and-Pipe is not what you would call a stylish house, nor was

the supper which took place at it on Monday what you would call a stylish banquet. You never were at a stylish feast in a stylish house where the *epergne* contained nothing better than lettuces centred with cucumber, and where a buck-handled steel was placed at the side of the chairman on which he was expected to whet his own carver. No; the Shepherd-and-Pipe is a homely house—the banquet of Monday was simply a homely banquet.

If the table looked well before the dishes were placed upon it, and before the company were seated, it was positively glorious when the President of the Club had the cover of his soup-tureen removed. The soup—Chesterfield, a degree over-spiced, perhaps—was so good that every one forgot to be decent (in a “Chesterfield” sense) and partook of it twice. After this second plate, the joviality of the evening fairly commenced, and before that prime quarter of lamb, that primer sirloin of beef, those several dishes of poultry, and that indefinable *entrée* or two were placed on the table, every one was in high spirits, and all were making the loudest attempts at jokes imaginable. It was delightful to see the old warblers clustered at the head of the table breaking out between the courses into faint fragments of rounds and roundelays—bestowing on us “boys,” at the other end, the most gracious smiles of welcome, and entering into grave controversies now and then on the merits of the Brahams, Stephenses, Patons, and Vestrises of other days. So full of harmony were their patriarchal faces, that you might have fancied they had been moulded, like those statues on the walls of Thebes, to the sound of music.

After dinner—which passed off in the best possible manner—grace was gravely sung by the club, and then the cloth was removed, and the wine placed upon the table. A very old cellar is that of the Shepherd-and-Pipe. There is wine in it that was bottled on the foundation of the Club nearly fifty years ago. It was some of this we had on Monday. Never—never shall I forget it. Of a pale brownish red—like the passionate flush on the swarthy cheek of Cleopatra—was its colour. It lay in the decanter like a jewel, or a chip of the Sangrael; it clung to the lips like the memory of the first kiss from some beloved mouth; it hung about the tongue like a line from Tennyson; it beaded in sprigs of brilliants round the glass; it perfumed the room, as though gusts of incense were wafted through the open casements; it sparkled at the bottom of your glass like fire-flies imprisoned in a lily-cup. It was, in fact, what one hears of daily, but rarely meets with—**PORT WINE.**

Our spirits rose with the wine. Music and oratory became the order of the night. We had ever so much from the members of the Club about Phillis, and not a little about hardy Norsemen. The President tried a solo, in which he sought to be informed whether he should waste him in despair just because a lady was fair, and gave us pretty clearly to understand that his own opinion was, that he shouldn't do anything so ridiculous. In this the room heartily concurred, and when the old gentleman finished off with a little bit of a falsetto trill, the very glasses seemed to rattle their approval. There was abundance of speechifying during the

evening. I know I proposed, first the health of the Club collectively, then the health of its members individually, and finally the health of Phillis. All the toasts were heartily responded to except the last, which was taken in hand by a young bachelor, who in trying to become suddenly very eloquent, became suddenly very eccentric, and ultimately had to be borne from the apartment. This, however, was not very easily effected; for the moment it was suggested he should retire, he affected a most intense sobriety, steadied himself behind a chair, looked stonily at the chairman, and began to give us young Melnotte's description of his palace by the Lake of Como. Oblivion, however, overtook him just where the perfumed mists of alabaster lamps steal in, and, falling on the shoulder of the portly landlord, as though he were Pauline, the mock prince was, at this point, carried from the room.

Soon after, the banquet broke up. The waiter was called in, and, amid much blushing and confusion (for when summoned he was busy stowing away a cold fowl in his umbrella), was presented with a decanter-stand of coppers which had been collected for him; while a deputation, consisting of the President and the two other oldest members of the Club, was sent to inform the hostess that her arrangements had given every satisfaction, and that her health had been most cordially drunk. Then the host came back with the deputation, and returned thanks for himself and wife in what the reporters would call a neat speech. That is to say, he observed that his greatest aim in life was to give satisfaction, which he believed consisted in good liquors

and reasonable charges. As to the Club, he was not a singer himself (he had a brother a vocalist, but that was neither here nor there), though he hoped he appreciated them as was. He could assure them that their glees sometimes brought tears in his eyes, which they did in the eyes of his wife and family. Then a parting bowl of punch was had up, engagements for a similar banquet at least three times a week were solemnly entered into, and one or two gentlemen who had declined to do anything during the earlier stage of the festival, broke, all at once, into song and speech. At length the company went trooping, with slightly unsteady gait, into the moonlight morning air; shook hands with intense affection at the corner of the street, and departed on their several ways. It was a goodly sight to watch the President, with an old fur-collared coat buttoned close up to the throat, and with a member of the Club on either arm, tripping along with buoyant tread, and leading, with many waves of his hat, a most vigorous rendering of that most popular of all glees, "We Won't Go Home," etc., etc. Late next morning, I understand, several of the Club met again by accident at the house, and, determining to make an "off day" of it, ran down to Richmond to blow away the effects of the previous night's revel. They tell me they had a quiet stroll and a quiet tea on the slopes of the "Star and Garter;" but as I was not present, I cannot say anything about it. I saw Melnotte, by the way, next day, wending his steps towards the hostelry, and at his request I accompanied him. As we stood taking some soda-and-brandy, I asked him how he enjoyed the banquet.

‘ Well, it was first-rate,” he said, “ but the fact of it was, *the stewed kidneys disagreed with me!*” Of course they did. That, no doubt, was his reason for taking brandy-and-soda.

XXII.

THE PAST AND LAST OF VAUXHALL.

FARE-THEE-WELL, and if for ever, still for ever fare-thee-well—Vauxhall! After all, many were thy attractions; and if the Fates have decreed that the Italian Walk is to be covered with bricks and mortar, my prayer is that suitable houses may be erected on “the classic ground,” and a suitable population found to occupy the houses. May all the fays and fairies who disport themselves at the Surrey during Christmastide, all the divine young ladies who leap through hoops at Astley’s—may Columbine and morris-dancer, spangled sprite and motley Harlequin—take up their residences on the Royal Property. Only with such inhabitants above, will the soul of the obsequious Simpson—whom Rumour affirmeth lies buried in the grounds—repose in peace. From the time when dear old Sir Roger de Coverley went with his friend The Spectator to the grounds (then famous as the Spring Garden of Lambeth) down to this present period, the spot has been sacred to pink fleshings and yellow boots, slouched hat and velvet domino, lace ruffles and embroidered vest,—and for every-day people in every-day habiliments to occupy the site would be a profanation that,

sooner or later, must bring some dire calamity upon the spot so desecrated. Places *have* been swallowed up before now—rivers have suddenly encroached upon populous districts. Let those who purchase Vauxhall Gardens for building purposes remember this, and exercise a due discretion. Let rows of painted pagodas and groups of Alpine cottages arise upon the spot; let the district be known as the Thespian Quarter; and let it be dedicated to the “profession” as exclusively as is St. Alban’s Place to half-pay military officers.

Full of pleasant reminiscences is “Spring Garden!” Groups of fascinating figures, from Nell Gwynn to Madame Vestris, come trooping in with the bare mention of the place. It was at Vauxhall that Nelly played some of her maddest pranks with Hart the actor, my Lord Buckhurst, and possibly other gallants; it was at Vauxhall that old Secretary Pepys mixed with court folk and jotted down on the spot some of his quaintest sentences. At Vauxhall the stately Evelyn would occasionally unbend; at Vauxhall Dick Steele took his glass of punch, and Pope and Addison kissed gloves as they passed each other in the Italian Walk; at Vauxhall Johnson, with Mrs. Thrale on one arm and Miss Burney on the other, would meet Goldsmith in his peach-coloured suit and steel-hilted sword; at Vauxhall the elegant Prince of Wales, with Fox and Sheridan, would, after brilliant badi-nage with the Duchess of Devonshire, condescend to hob-nob with serving-girls and players; at Vauxhall, it is said, the late Duke of York first met with that dextrous army-agent and dispenser of commissions,

Mrs. Mary Anne Clarke; at Vauxhall (which furnished a *casus belli* for many a "Drawcausir") Parson Horne, better known afterwards as Horne Tooke, would, after a purly diversion, grow hotly argumentative, and try conclusions with his adversary at the rapier's point; and—to bring this string of characters who have moved through Life's Masque to a close—it was at Vauxhall that Byron frequently attested the truth of that confession in "Don Juan" that he was mightily fond of

A lobster-salad, and champagne, and chat.

In connexion with this part of the subject I cannot resist giving an extract from a very pleasantly-written journal—privately printed and circulated only to a limited extent—of a visit to England in 1775, by the Rev. Dr. Thos. Campbell, author of a "Philosophical Survey of the South of Ireland."

May 1st.—I went to Spring Gardens in the morning, and to the ball in the evening. It was very splendid, for the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland were expected, but the Duke having sprained his leg, at the last did not come, but there was the Duke and Duchess of Grafton, and Lady Georgina Fitz Roy, so like the pictures of Charles the Second, that everybody cognised the likeness when I pointed it out to them. Lord Mahon and his lady, Lord Chatham's daughter. The beauties were Miss Haywood, the most exquisitely pretty, for a fair complexion, I ever saw. She saw me admire, and she would even come and sit beside me, yet so innocently sweet was her manner that it seemed angelic. Miss Wroughton—that I think is the name—was rather the brunette beauty, but she discovered such sensibility of mind, and had so much beauty, that I fancy, upon acquaintance, I should prefer her to Miss Haywood. Miss Mankensy (*sic*), niece to Lord Galway, was a most elegant figure, but had not that sweetness of countenance the two charming English girls possessed, yet her air and mien was in

a grander *gusto*. There were four men in the room from one to four inches taller than myself, but whether they were English, Irish, or Scotch, I know not. N.B.—Mrs. Hodges, Miss Luttrell, and Lord Thomas Clinton were there, and Mr. Garrie, greater than all, to say nothing of Billy Madden, who being put into a chair to compromise some dispute between the room partys, and finding them difficult to be prevailed on, he got up and danced them a hornpipe, which put them at once into a good temper.

The little volume from which this extract is taken is, I may add, full of interesting gossip on Johnson, Goldsmith, and other notabilities of the period.

The novels and plays of the last century abound in allusions to Vauxhall. Miss Burney, especially, makes a point of taking some of her people to the place—one of them, poor fellow, shot himself there—and, as well as I remember, Mr. Richardson, who wrote those brief and pointed stories about female virtue, permitted Miss Harlowe to honour the grounds with her presence. At all events, Fielding, in his delightful novel of “Amelia,” gives us a capital photographic sketch of the gardens. But above all other bookish reminiscences that cling about this Vanity Fair, is the ever-memorable night when Josh. Sedley took that dear creature Miss Sharp, and brewed the celebrated bowl of punch in which the plain gold ring that Becky coveted so dearly fell and sank for ever!

With the great names professionally connected with Vauxhall, it were easy to fill a volume. From Spring Garden, Roubilliac received his first important commission; and Hayman and Hogarth painted several pictures for the Pavilion and supper rooms. But amongst the catalogue of names eminent in the arts, the sons and daughters of Apollo

far out-number all others. In the famous Rotunda have stood in our own times, Mrs. Bland and Inledon, the Storaces and Braham, Stephens and Charles Taylor; and among foreign *virtuosi*, Grisi and Mario, Persiani and Rubini, Lablache and De Begnis. Of the masters who have honoured it with original compositions, the glorious trio—Handel, Arne, and Boyce—may be mentioned: and in later days, James Hook, the father of the author of “Gilbert Gurney,” shone conspicuously as the *genius loci*.

Various have been the speculative theories advanced of late to account for the declension and decay of a place the fascinations of which charmed so many generations of pleasure-seekers. Some think a reduction in prices settled its fate—others that the decline was brought about by a democratic thickening of the ham-sandwiches. A more probable hypothesis, and one sufficiently broad to take in many places besides the renowned “Spring Garden,” seems to be this. When London was about as large as Birmingham, Vauxhall and Ranelagh were considered sufficient for all the *al fresco* pleasures of the metropolis. In time, however, the population doubled and trebled—green fields disappeared, and streets and terraces arose upon their sites—and London instead of being *one town*, became a group of towns. As a necessary consequence public gardens sprung up on every hand, and each neighbourhood patronized its local Eden. The Houris of London no longer flocked to one paradise. The operation of this principle, in fact, brought the Royal Property down to a parochial level—that is, it had to depend mainly on the support of the surrounding population, just as Rosherville de-

pend on Gravesend, and the Surrey Gardens on Camberwell and Walworth. The masquerades, to which up to quite a modern period the fashionables of London continued to resort, were exceptional affairs, confined to a limited class, and don't affect the question. There was a time—and then Vauxhall and the patent houses were in their glory—when London was essentially a common centre, its inhabitants flocking to certain favourite spots with all the gregariousness which marks the movements of country places; but now that Islington and Belgravia are no longer fields and market-gardens, and when, moreover, the modes, customs, and even religion of Islington are as different to the religion, customs, and manners of Belgravia, as milk-and-water is to wine, we can hardly expect that any place of amusement should be looked upon as essentially *metropolitan*. Thus Vauxhall declines—thus Vauxhall finally falls.

Stevens, the last of the lessees, can only be regarded as a patriotic Tribune who tried, Rienzi-like, to revive the glories of the past. Alas! the history of this period is a brief one. It extends over just seven days. It commenced with a storm and ended (for the historical parallel is complete) with a riot. I was present, and the memories of that night will never leave me. Stevens, surrounded with punch-bowls, hams, lobsters, and champagne-bottles, for a long time endeavoured to assuage the people; but in vain. Statues were overthrown, the precious oil of lamps was poured by young “vestals” upon the heads of all who came in their way; wine-flasks and punch pateras were wildly thrown about, and in the mêlée, Stevens, napkin in hand, was brutally struck

down. It was an awful night—a feast of madness and a flow of oil! What a contrast the scene presented to an evening at Vauxhall in the days of our forefathers—when quilted doublets and trunk breeches were in fashion; when my Lord Duke in court suit took his bottle of Rhenish in the supper room; when Lady Betty and her comely daughters sat opposite his Grace and wagged their heavy plumes of ostrich feathers in answer to his gallantries; and when even the vocalists in the Rotunda wore full-topped crimson boots, cocked hats, and velvet-sheathed rapiers.

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